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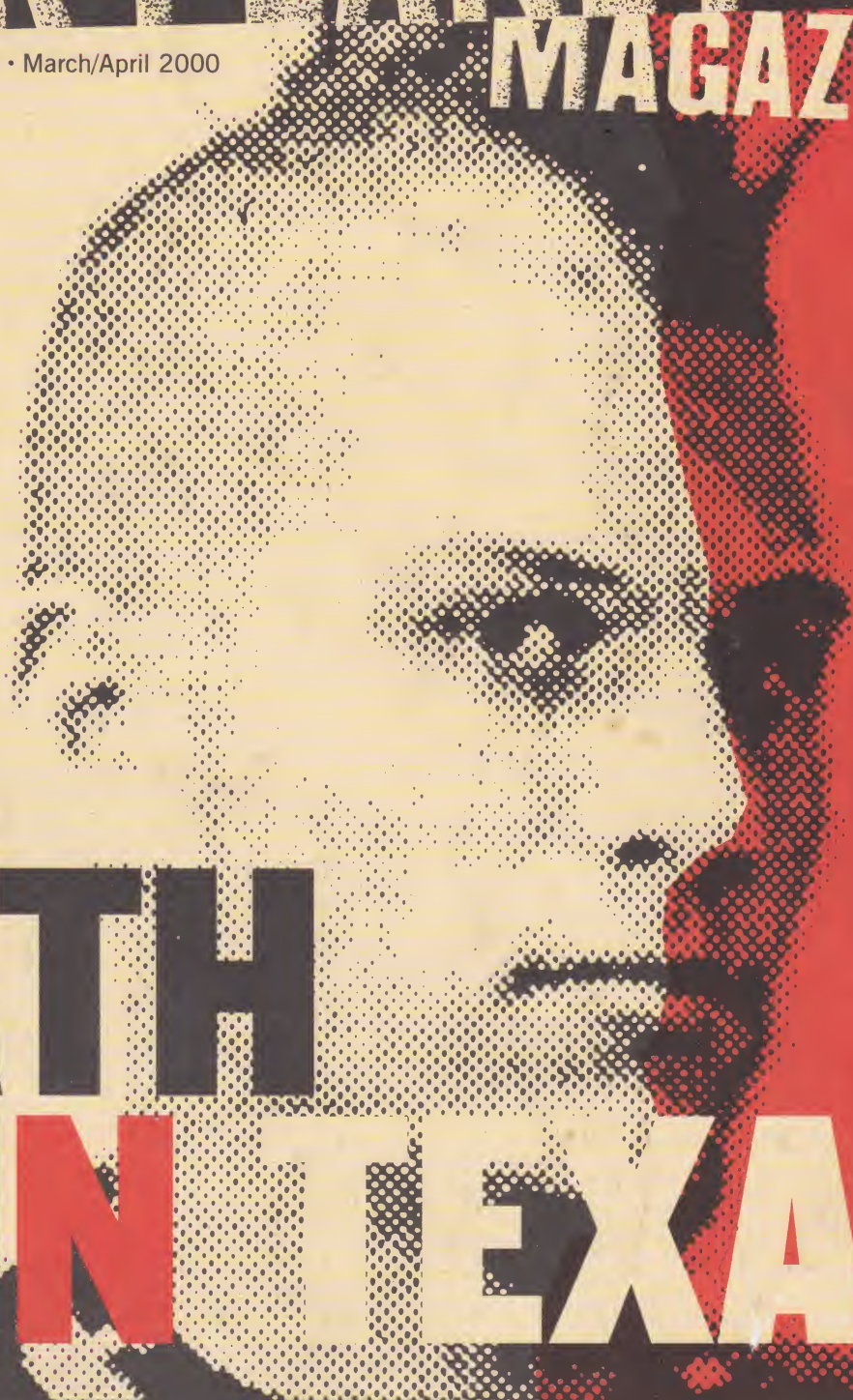
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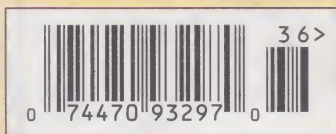
MAGAZINE

**Brian Deneke
was killed
because he
was a punk.**

**His killer
never spent a
night in jail.**



DEATH IN TEXAS



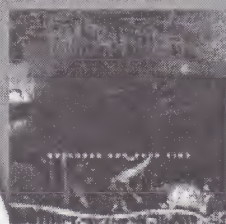
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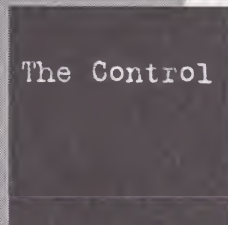
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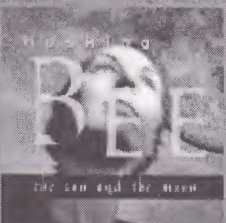
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the hard rhymers

Joel Schalit
minister of information

Eric Action
Scott Yahtzee
the track attackers

Jennifer Ambrose
supreme master of defense

Jessica Hopper
media assassin

Dustin Mertz
retail operative

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All ads are due
May 1
for PP38 July/August 2000

Ads not reserved will get in, but you have no say as to what issue. Any ads received after deadline may run in the following issue. Those are the risks ... Are you the gambling type?
the risks

I'm passing on my intro duties on this issue. I could have written something about our cover story, about the sadness learning about Brian Deneke's death caused me. But there are others who have felt the sadness—felt the pain—much, much worse than I have. I leave this intro to one of those people, Jacqui Balderaz.

Jacqui was a friend of Brian's. Chris Ziegler, the author of "Death in Texas" asked her to write a sidebar to his story. After looking at the length of Chris' story, I was worried that Jacqui's words might get lost. I felt it would be better if her words opened this issue instead. Here they are:

After being interviewed by Chris Z, we were given a chance to write anything we wanted to say. At first, I wasn't going to write anything. I figured everything we wanted to say would be said in the article. But, just last night I changed my mind.

I was thinking about Brian, about how much I miss him—how much we all miss him—what kind of person he was, and things we shared when he was alive. I started thinking about how stupid people are. He was killed because a group of kids didn't like the way he dressed. They didn't understand his lifestyle and it scared them. How awful it must be to have such little regard for human life. I started to get angry, not just at those who killed him, but at myself also. How many times have I wanted to lash out at someone who didn't agree with me?

Brian's story is starting to get heard, it's been on national television 2 or 3 times already, not to mention the countless newspaper articles. Everyone who interviews us asks, "What do you want people to

know?" I've thought about it and here it goes: I want kids to understand that hate kills—all hate. Violence goes hand in hand with hate. It's all stupid and it's not worth the cost. It's not worth seeing one of your friends murdered. Or the helpless feeling of not being able to stop it—the guilt you feel thinking, "If only we hadn't gone. If only I stopped him. If only...."

Everyone says "We need unity!" but how many know what that is? Unity is the state of being one; united in being one body; the absence of diversity. We can never be united as long as there is hate. Violence sucks! Every time I hear someone say, "Oh, I want to get in a fight tonight" or something equally stupid, I cringe. I want to scream "Haven't you learned anything?!"

To anyone who reads this article and goes "Oh, I wish I could do something about this" you can. Stop violence! Stop hate! We don't need anymore loved ones dead. It's not worth it. What do I want? I want people to remember Brian. I want people to understand what hate and violence does. You can never win with either. It's not worth it. But, it starts with us.

Jacqui Balderaz
1-17-2000

What more could I add? Not a whole lot. Please read this issue's cover story, "Death in Texas." It's a long story, but it's a heartbreaking, moving, tragic, infuriating, and important story well worth the time and effort it takes to read it all.

See you when summer hits,

DAN

COVER STORY



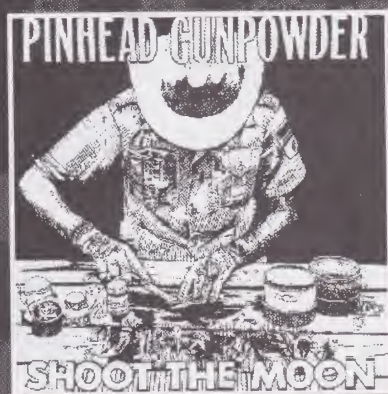
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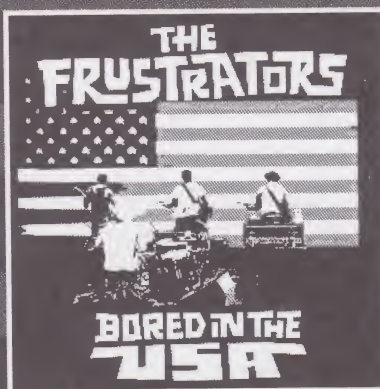
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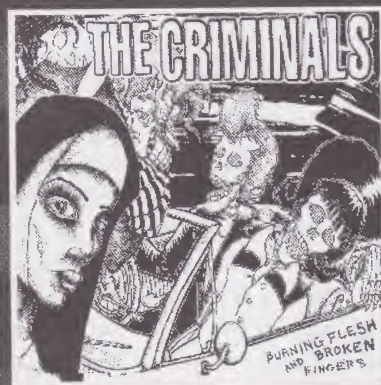


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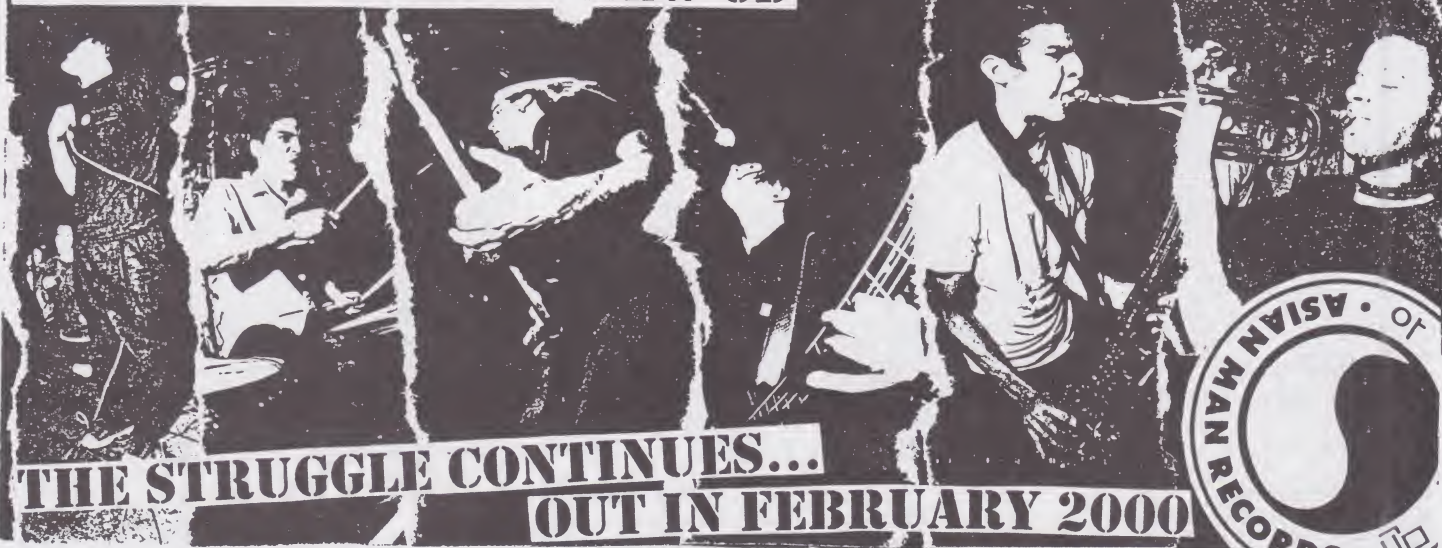


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New Jersey
- 03.12 Swing Set
Long Island
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- 03.16 Millvale Theater
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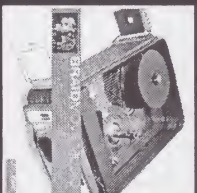
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VOL ONE + VOL TWO MARCH 28 2000

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Hey... Warped tour DOES suck.

Punk Planet,

I have just finished your article about the Van's Warped Tour ["Extreme Exploitation" PP34]. It really brought home and crystallized some ideas that have been brewing in my mind for several years now.

I was at a Warped Tour show in Chicago in 1995 when the bands chose not to sell merchandise rather than give the venue what they felt was an obscene slice of the profits. Later in the day, at the urging of one of the headlining bands, the rather small crowd broke through the rather weak attempt at forcing us into assigned seats and "rushed" the stage. This moment, for me, solidified the place of punk rock in the "alternative" revolution. On the one hand, the venue had attempted to force assigned seats on customers who had paid for general admission (due to inclement weather). At the urging of the band, the crowd responded by taking back what was theirs (the general admission) but then went too far (ripping out a number of seats so they could mosh).

In college, I was told that our generation and the one succeeding us would be more "media savvy" than any that preceded it. I now wonder about the accuracy of that statement. Perhaps we were fools to believe we were beyond the reach of the Holy Hand of Commerce, and its avenging angel, advertising. It seems that what we took for savvy was really only directed in a new direction, and that, if you simply told someone that consuming a particular product made them "extreme", instead of stylish, or charismatic, or sexy, that they would buy. I had hoped that we had finally made a difference, and that music had helped create a group of young people who realized that our society had been built on a particularly nasty foundation; they would promise you the moon to get you to buy a soda.

I must admit I came to my musical fruition at a time when "alternative" still had a meaning. Like it or not, the under-

ground that we so cherished was used just the same as every other trend that came before it. Rather than digging deeper into the fertile soil that was there, record companies and MTV simply created an easy listening version of the "next big thing." So here we have the Warped Tour, with Blink 182 headlining.

Reading Tristan Laughter's essay, ["Warped and Woodstock: Punk's Failures" PP34] I believe it is clear that we have allowed the inmates to run the asylum. True, we reached the mainstream. But did we change them? Apparently not, if such frat-like behavior now passes for punk rock. As Tristan says, it does seem a bit subversive, having Avail or Lunachicks play the tour. I wonder, however, if they made a dent into the thuggish collective mind, or if perhaps the very presence of a tour shows a band with principals what it might get if it simply allowed itself to shift just a fraction of a degree to the right. I do not say this to condemn those two bands. I simply could not blame them for wanting their slice of the pie—a pie which is being eaten by undeserving opportunists.

I wonder if there is an answer. It seemed like punk might open some minds back a few years ago. Instead, it was just retooled for those who now added another flavor to the music they would allow to be played at their parties. We get Blink, or swing dancing, or any number of other fads. Apparently, there is a quota on the number of intelligent people whose minds are willing to see what is behind the present, and an unlimited number of those willing to glom onto the "next big thing."

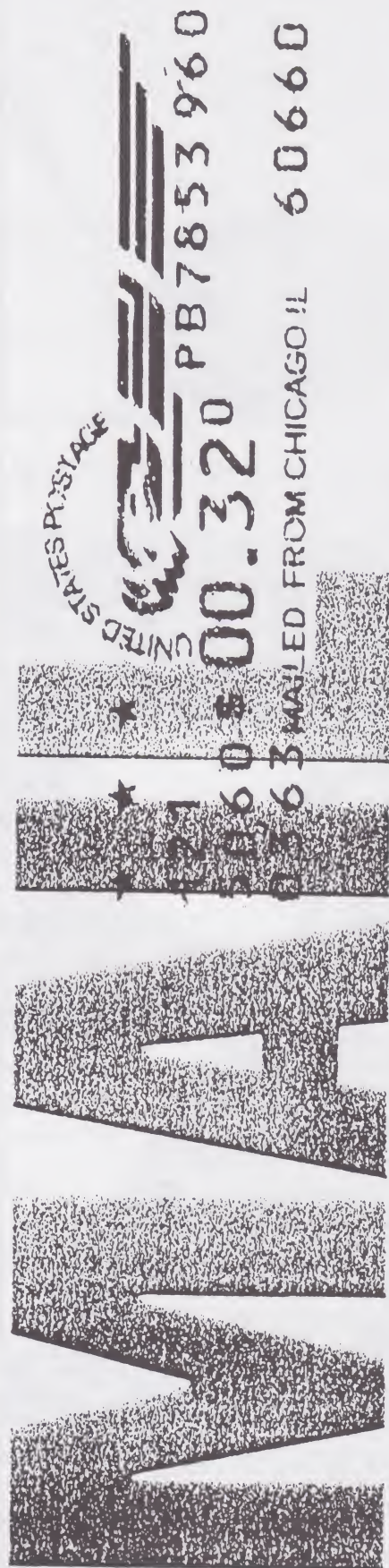
Sincerely,

Ryan O'Blivion

A hacker weighs in...

Dear Punk Planet,

I wanted to thank you and Chris Ziegler for the article "Hacktivism" in the September/October issue of your zine [PP33].



For the first time in years I finally read an article on hackers that gave a fair, unbiased view on the subject. I've read countless numbers of articles by sensationalizing assholes who have slandered or just plain lied about what a hacker is, and have tried to make them out to be ruthless monsters trying to destroy your computer for the sake of looking good. Sure I could blame some of it on ignorance, but with a little research in places other than Government funded web sites and the mainstream media they would have figured out, and proclaimed the difference between a hacker and a cracker.

My only hope is that more people will read and listen to the truth, or it will get uglier than it already is. Don't believe what MTV tells you, find out for yourselves. Don't believe someone is a hacker because he/she says they are and that they can destroy your AOL account, they are not a hacker.

Thanks again,

Repute

Bus bust etiquette

Punk Planet,

Recently, I had the pleasure once again of riding Greyhound. It wasn't a long ride, but it was just long enough to remind me of the horrors of the 'Hound. Much more disturbing than the usual discomforts, though, was having the bus searched by the Drug Enforcement Agency.

We pulled into the Toledo station, to let people on and off the bus, on the way to Detroit. A man and a woman got on board and walked casually down the aisle, as if looking for seats. Suddenly, they turned to one man, showed a badge, explained they were DEA agents looking for large sums of money, drugs or guns, and could they search his bags? There was another agent standing by the door of the bus and two or three more outside of the bus. I started asking them questions, they asked if they could search me.

I told them no. They fucked with a couple more people and then left the bus. This is the first time I've seen this (I try to avoid riding Greyhound at all costs), but other riders told me that they've seen this quite frequently of late.

Besides my disgust at the general invasion of privacy and personal space, there are a few things about this that I want to point out. For one, the driver wasn't on the bus during the search. There was no Greyhound employee overseeing the search, so therefore no official witness to be sought for recourse (however weak) in the event of inappropriate conduct or abuse of power. If I had a complaint, at least I could take it to whatever Greyhound worker was there, and be able to get this person's word on it later. Again, it's not much, but it might be something. Any fool can go to the army surplus store and get a badge, and these agents were in plainclothes. Not that I really expect some jerk to pose as a DEA agent on the bus and paw through my dirty socks, but it's something to be considered nonetheless. Greyhound gives no announcement or warning in any way that if you ride Greyhound, you may be subjected to search by the DEA.

Now, how much drug/gun trafficking can really be taking place on the bus? That Greyhound gleefully complies with this intimidation and police-state tactics is sad, but to be expected. I don't know the exact boundaries of our rights in this situation; I do know that you can tell them 'no' when they ask to search your stuff. I'd suggest you do it in a loud manner, and let everyone else on the bus know that they can say no as well.

John Gerken

Catch of the Day mystery (finally) revealed!

Hi there,

I just checked out your magazine for the first time (the one with Calvin

Johnson and the stuff about Kosovo, gentrification, etc.) [PP32] and it's really great. When I see the word "punk" these days I instantly think of boring, homogenized & corrupted "punk rock" but your magazine is a wonderful exception, with a great spirit and coverage of important topics that go undiscussed elsewhere.

Anyway, I was really interested in your interview with the woman behind Catch of the Day Mailorder, a project I had never heard of before. It made me want to write to her and get a catalog, but I couldn't find an address for Catch of the Day anywhere. I did a search on the web and found nothing there either. I was wondering if you could help me out by telling me how to contact them. I would really appreciate it because it sounds like an exciting project. Well, please let me know and I will look forward to reading many more issues of *Punk Planet*.

Thanks,

Dan

Dan—

As a general rule (that, granted, has been broken more than once) we tend to not put contact information for people/bands interviewed. I feel like if we do that, we're basically just publishing a press release. We're interviewing people not because they have something new out, but because they have a good story to tell—something that goes beyond commerce.

However, due to the *overwhelming* requests we've been getting for the last few months for Catch of the Day Mailorder's address, here it is:

PO Box 1784, Olympia, WA 98507-1784

Thanks,

Dan Sinker

Got something on your mind? Got a problem with something we've printed? Want to tell us that we're doing a good job? Just need a friend? Then drop us a line at:

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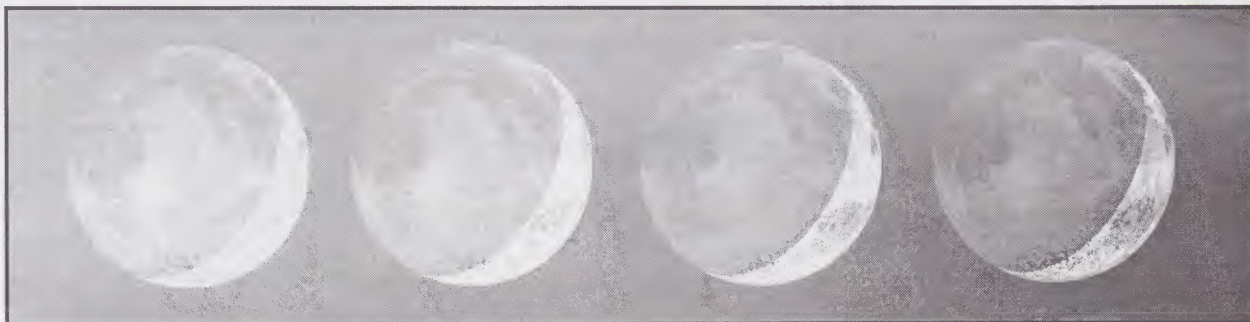
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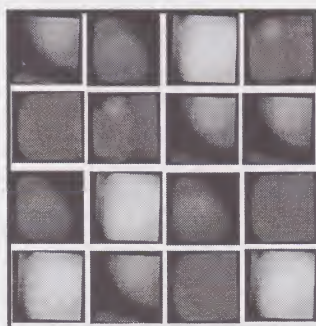
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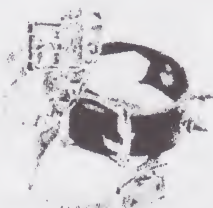
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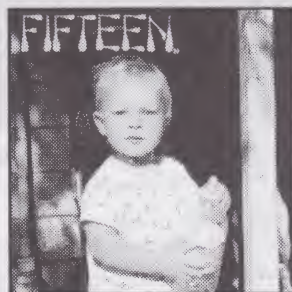
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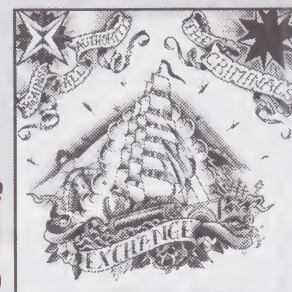
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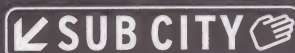
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COLUMN



On Wednesday December 6, 1989, at around 5:10p.m., Marc Lepine, age 25, walked into the Ecole Polytechnique, the University of

Montreal's engineering school. He'd armed himself with a .233 calibre Sturn Ruger semi-automatic rifle, knives, and bandoliers of ammunition. Having made his way to the second floor of the building, and killing a finance department employee in the process, Lepine entered Room 303 where approximately 48 engineering students were gathered. It was their second last day of classes. He ordered the women to move to one side of the room, and the men to leave altogether. The students thought it was some sort of joke, until Lepine brought out the rifle and fired two shots into the ceiling.

"You're all a bunch of feminists, and I hate feminists!"

He lined the women up along one wall, and the men left the classroom without protest. One of the remaining students tried to reason with him. He responded with opening fire upon the women, six of whom were shot dead. He then walked through the corridors firing randomly, entered the cafeteria where he killed three more women, then went into a second classroom and killed four more women. It was in that room, roughly 20 minutes after embarking on his rampage, that he took his own life. The following suicide letter was found on Lepine's body after he shot 27 people at the Ecole Polytechnique, murdering 14 women, wounding nine more men and four women.

"Forgive the mistakes, I only had 15 minutes to write this. Please note that if I am committing suicide today 89-12-06 it is not for economic reasons (for I have waited until I exhausted all my financial means, even refusing jobs) but for political reasons. For I have decided to send Ad Patres [Latin for 'To the fathers.'] the feminists who have ruined my life. It has been seven years that life does

not bring me any joy and being totally blasé, I have decided to put an end to those viragos.

I had already tried as a youth to enlist in the [Canadian Armed] Forces as an officer cadet, which would have allowed me to enter the arsenal and precede Lortie in a rampage [reference to an earlier mass killing in Quebec, 1984]. They refused me because antisocial [sic]. So I waited until this day to carry out all my projects. In-between, I continued my studies in a haphazard way for they never really interested me knowing in advance my fate. Which did not prevent me from obtaining very good marks despite not handing in my theory assignments and studying little before exams.

Even though the Mad Killer epithet will be attributed to me by the media, I consider myself a rational and erudite person that only the arrival of the Grim Reaper has forced to undertake extreme acts. For why persevere in existing if it is only to please the government. Being rather retrograde by nature (except for science), the feminists always have a talent for enraging me. They want to retain the advantages of being women (e.g. cheaper insurance, extended maternity leave preceded by a preventative leave) while seizing for themselves those of men.

Thus, it is self-evident that if the Olympic Games removed the Men/Women distinction, there would be women only in the graceful events. So the feminists are not fighting to remove that barrier. They are so opportunistic that they neglect to profit from the knowledge accumulated by men throughout the ages. They always try to misrepresent them every time they can. Thus, the other day, people were honoring the Canadian men and women who fought at the frontlines during the world wars. How does this sit with the fact that women were not authorized to go to the frontline at the time??? Will we hear of Caesar's female legions and female galley slaves who of course took up 50 percent of his history's ranks, although they never existed? A real Casus Belli.

Sorry for this too brief letter.

Marc Lepine"

At this juncture, Lepine penned a 19-name hit list of various Quebec women, all of whom have excelled in traditionally male-

IS P P36

dominated professions. This very specific list included a feminist journalist, the president of a teacher's union (the CEQ), the vice-president of the CSN, the Canadian champion of the 1988 Chartered Accountant exams, the first woman firefighter in Quebec, the first woman police captain in Quebec, a sportscaster, a bank manager, a TV host, a transition-house worker, etc. Lastly, there is a note at the bottom of the hit list to close off the letter:

"Nearly died today. The lack of time (because I started too late) has allowed those radical feminists to survive.

Alea Jacta EST. [Latin for 'The die are cast.']"

Lepine was a victim of child abuse, a failed military candidate, a lover of war films, and a mass murderer. He was not a student of the school wherein he wreaked so much terror. However, he had previously applied for admittance to their engineering program and was turned down. He obviously felt that he had lost his place to one of them greedy, opportunistic feminists who didn't deserve to be there.

It wasn't only rage against the feminist movement. It was rage against women period—

brutal misogyny at its worst. Fourteen women were killed simply because they are women. They did not get a chance to self-identify as feminist or not, as Lepine did that for them. Their male peers survived because they are men.

Some people feel more comfortable thinking that this was just another freakish backlash against society. But there's no way that shit like this comes to fruition and eventual self-destruction within its own little bubble. Clearly, Lepine set out on a mission that day to right the wrongs that had been cultivated by his own troubled, experiential logic. To gloss over the sentiment behind this tragedy would be to deny the importance of those 14 deaths.

The Montreal Massacre so acutely mirrors an unseen bitterness and hatred in society—the irremovable stain of domestic violence, rape, murder, child abuse, etc. It did for the feminist movement what the Rodney King beating did for race relations in the States. It re-awakened numerous issues, a lot of pain, and brought it to the forefront of people's minds; it sparked a sense

of self-awareness that is affected by all of these highly significant events which are representative of ongoing societal struggles.

This past December marked the 10-year anniversary of the Montreal Massacre. What has happened since December 6, 1989? In 1990, the Canadian government devoted funds to research on the issue of violence against women, and pronounced December 6 as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Every year, across the nation, there are candle-light vigils, concerts for reflection, and people wearing white ribbons and '14 Not Forgotten' buttons to symbolize their empathy and support. Groups like the December 6th Victims Foundation Against Violence, and Men4Change are constantly working on their outreach and education on the themes of violence, sexism, racism, etc. Several film and video documentaries have been made which explore the same aforementioned issues in an effort to open up the discourse even further. Monuments have been erected in recognition of the 14 victims' martyr-like status.

There is little comfort after hearing about an incident like the Montreal Massacre. But come post-Halloween hoopla and pre-Holidays hubbub for years to come, I hope you'll take the time out to think about the following women:

Genevieve Bergeron, 21, was a second year scholarship student in civil engineering.

Helene Colgan, 23, was in her final year of mechanical engineering and planned to take her master's degree.

Nathalie Croteau, 23, was in her final year of mechanical engineering.

Barbara Daigneault, 22, was in her final year of mechanical engineering and held a teaching assistantship.

Anne-Marie Edward, 21, was a first year student in chemical engineering.

Maud Haviernick, 29, was a second year student in engineering materials, a branch of metallurgy, and a graduate in environmental design.

Barbara Maria Klucznik, 31, was a second year engineering stu-

dent specializing in engineering materials.

Maryse Laganier, 25, worked in the budget department of the Polytechnique.

Maryse Leclair, 23, was a fourth year student in engineering materials.

Anne-Marie Lemay, 27, was a fourth year student in mechanical engineering.

Sonia Pelletier, 28, was to graduate the next day in mechanical engineering. She was awarded a degree posthumously.

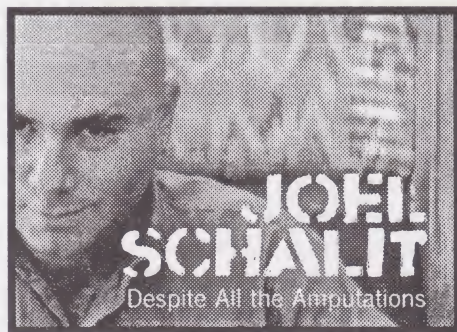
Michele Richard, 21, was a second year student in engineering materials.

Annie St-Arneault, 23, was a mechanical engineering student.

Annie Turcotte, 21, was a first year student in engineering materials.

...

Patti Kim, Box 68568, 360A Bloor St.W, Toronto ON, M5S 1X1
Canada or fhazine@interlog.com



I never thought I'd go back to England. But, as I planned to return home to Israel to spend New Year's with my family, I

finally made the jump. I had to change planes somewhere in Europe. This time, a friend in the music business who works for a large distribution company (and with whom my band has had some dealings with in the past) invited me to stay with him in London. Amidst talk of possibly working together again, I agreed. Even if things did not work out, we'd struck up a good friendship over the past few years, so I knew I'd have a great time regardless. After so many years of exchanging letters about each other's lives, we'd finally get to know the real people hidden by our computer screens. And I'd also get to tie up some loose personal ends that go back to the summer of 1979, to a time when my father and I lived in England. I hadn't been back since then. Finally, I had an excuse to return.

The last time thing I can remember about England was hurriedly rushing out of our hotel room in the middle of the night while the concierge wasn't looking. My father was determined to get us out of there before he realized we were skipping town without paying our bill. After two months of hiding out there, we'd incurred quite a number of expenses, such a large number, I'm afraid, that there was no way we were ever going to be able to cover them. Our only funds were allotted to two one way tickets to

Italy, where my father knew we'd be taken care of. Elie had a Yugoslavian friend named Carlo in Milan whom he'd served in the army with during the Second World War. Carlo owed us one. He'd put us up for a while.

Since then, England has loomed over me as though it was an outstanding invoice that I never filled. Of course it wasn't my responsibility to pay our hotel bill. I knew that. I was only twelve at the time. I'm speaking purely of metaphors, the kind that our unfilled debt came to symbolize in terms of what we got out of our three-year stay there. We didn't really owe England anything. In fact, it always felt like England owed us. For my father, it was because of a failed marriage to a wealthy Israeli woman who lived there. For me, it was the first in a series of disastrous attempts at having a real family. That's what England was all about. As we got on the airplane and beat yet another retreat back to Europe three years later, I was reminded of how we never could have remained in there.

Perhaps it was how I was prepared to feel about England. As the child of a man who'd lived under British colonial rule, served time in British military jails, and had been conscripted into the Commonwealth to fight against the Germans, Elie had a justifiable amount of antipathy towards Great Britain. Whenever we would drive through Arab villages in the former Occupied Territories, he would reach in back to make sure he had enough ammunition at his disposal in the event that we'd run into trouble. "It's all the British's fault," he would explain. "For two thousand years, the Muslim world treated Jews better than the Christian one did. All it took was thirty years of military occupation by the British to change that. They played us off each other. Now look what we've got. When I was your age, I had Arab playmates. Now, you can only play with fellow Jews. What a tragedy."

As I grew older and learned more about the era my father grew up in, I started to understand the sources of his anger. Yes, British colonial rule in Palestine drastically contributed to a worsening of Muslim-Jewish relations. The British promised both sides everything. Given the history of peaceful relations between the two peoples until the end of 19th century, Jews didn't need to add anyone to their list of persecutors, real or imagined. As far as my father was concerned, it was the British who were the genuine enemy because they created enmity between the two peoples. But we could always patch things up with the Arabs, he reasoned. After all, we're Semites. We're more like each other than we are like *them*.

But, for as well heeled as I became in my father's rather solitary version of inter-Semitic solidarity, it did not prepare me in the least for what I was about to experience: A reverse migration, back to our colonizer's homeland. It all started one hot and dusty Saturday afternoon in the fall of 1976. After a lengthy trip abroad, my father hurriedly returned and announced that he'd gotten married to an Israeli woman who lived abroad. "Really?" I asked in shock. "To who?" "An Israeli widow of Algerian descent, who lives alone with her two children in London," Elie replied. "When will

they be moving here?" I asked my father. "No child, the question is when will we be moving there," he curtly answered. "I think we'll go there this winter. You can continue your studies there. Esther will provide a room for you in her house in London." I was stunned. "Isn't London the capital of England?"

I'd only been to England once before, but I thought I knew everything about it already. We visited the country during the summer, and all it did was rain. I immediately became seized by the most basic of fears: No more Mediterranean sunshine. No more brilliant red sunsets every afternoon. Just a tyranny of incessant clouds, where the only difference between day and night was how people's shadows changed in the presence of chandeliers and street lamps. The poor light was all the evidence I needed to understand the origins of British imperialism.

My adolescent mind decided that the search for genuine sunshine forced the British to leave their country and start causing trouble abroad. The Arab-Israeli conflict was all about the British punishing us for having a more hospitable climate. Here I was running right back to the source of all of Israel's problems, a sure sign that the British had won. All of the sudden I started to fear how I might change. I'd become a pale skinned, lethargic, bookish, aesthetically inclined European Jew, the opposite of the athletic, tanned, healthy 'New Man of Zion,' I'd been raised to believe Israel had given me the right to become. Even at the tender age of nine, it felt like a historical regression. I was absolutely terrified.

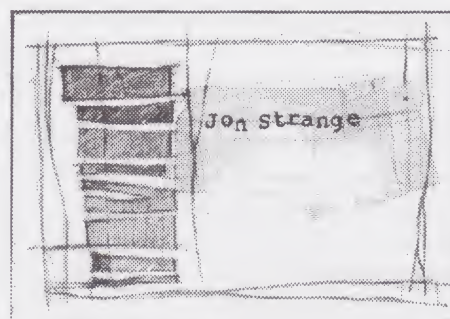
As I prepared to go back once again, twenty years later, I realized how I'd never forced myself to think about any of this before. That is, until now. What triggered it all wasn't necessarily the fact that I would be casually visiting a foreign country, as much as I would be returning to the place where I stopped being an Israeli. Everything I feared turning into at age nine, I became. I shunned returning home to serve in the army in favor of going to a good college in the United States. Instead of becoming a businessman, I became a musician. In lieu of cultivating my body, I dedicated my life to my studies.

As I folded my clothes, packaged some of my records, and inserted the essays about nationalism I planned to read during my flight into various compartments of my carry-on, I had to laugh. Regardless of how immature I was at the time I moved to England, at age nine I was already smart enough to intuit how it would alter the course of my life. Here I was bringing back the end results of the personal transformation that I'd begun there twenty-two years before.

All of the sudden I recalled the very first thing I did after I arrived in London. I opened my backpack, and pulled out a cheap multi-band radio that a relative had given me before I left, so I could listen to Israeli radio while I was in exile. I turned it on, and flipped through the channels until I found something. It was the Nazi jackboot stomp-opening to The Sex Pistols' "Holiday in the Sun." Having been raised on socialist campfire sing-along praising the mighty state of Israel, I was awestruck at the alien

sounds that were all of the sudden emanating out of my cheap Middle Eastern radio. "These English people are weird," I remember thinking. "All they sing about is taking vacations in concentration camps."

How ironic then that it was a friendship formed around making punk rock that was bringing me back to England so many years later. Yes, I was metaphorically in debt to England, but not for my father's unpaid hotel bills. Rather, I was in debt to a band whose ridiculous sense of humor about the Holocaust helped me overcome having been indoctrinated by Jewish nationalism. With that in mind, I took one last look at my CDs, closed my bag up, and called a cab to take me to the airport. "Where are you flying to?" asked the switchboard operator. "Israel, man," I told them, "Israel."



Onward, Christian Soldiers!

(Find Somewhere Else To Go)

I received a phone call recently from a kid who was

booking a show here in town. Seems his show space had fallen through, so he called my house to see if we could help him out by letting him use our basement for the show. "Sounds okay—who are the bands?" we asked him. He listed several familiar local hardcore bands, including a so-called "Christian hardcore" band, End of Man. Reminding this poor yutz that we had a long-standing policy against promoting any bands in our show space that gave voice to reactionary, hateful, or disempowering ideologies, we politely declined. He hung up on us, pissed off.

Let me explain why I call this kid a yutz, along with any other punk who supports Christianity's invasion of the punk community. Let me also explain why there is no room for Christianity in any legitimate definition of punk, and why, in fact, it is imperative that we not tolerate Christian proselytizing in our community. I even promise to do so without invoking the timeless argument over the ridiculous notion of "god."

I realize I am setting out on a risky course when I suggest that our scene should be intolerant of Christianity. Promoting intolerance is a tough row to hoe in the wishy-washy liberal "everyone's opinion is valid" world that we live in. People will doubtless accuse me (and have in the past) of discrimination and censorship. I would counter that as in any resistance against missionaries and colonialists, it's tough to preserve your autonomy and avoid accusations that you're being exclusionary. There are cases when we need to question the notion that all opinions are equally valid, and this is one of them.

No one sane would blink an eye when told that racist, sexist, or classist viewpoints would not be tolerated in our house, or on our stage. The punk scene has a long-standing tradition of, at the very least, paying lip service to the importance of creating an environment in which these hateful views are not welcome. Suddenly, intolerance is okay, huh? However, when we take that stance to its next logical step, by insisting that our show space will not be used to support Christianity, a religion which has provided the justification for countless systems of oppression against workers, women, people of color, and queer people, we're told that we're bigots. This is as ridiculous as claiming that such a thing as "reverse discrimination" exists. As the dominant feature running throughout American culture, morals, laws, and media, Christians have little ground to stand on when they claim they're being discriminated against unfairly when the punk scene tells them to get lost.

Of course, for all the campaigns of repression and hatred which those involved justify by using Christianity—and its book of nonsense—as basis of support, the religion has also been used to politically radical ends. That this is an exception rather than the norm is worth emphasizing. Nonetheless, groups like the Catholic Workers and Voices in the Wilderness have conducted extended campaigns for social justice, with some success, and they have done so by interpreting Christian beliefs in a progressive, socially conscious way. Many other supporters of liberation theology have used the bible as inspiration in their efforts to overcome severe forms of oppression throughout the so-called third world. I'm not denying the power or efficacy of this work. But when a pampered middle class white male Christian tells me that he supports the bible except for the parts which say that homosexuality is wrong, or that women are to be subservient to men, it's a whole different ball game. Radical activists drawing on Christianity for inspiration is a completely different story from the same old privileged folks making apologies for the institutions of power.

Hopefully, *Punk Planet's* readers are familiar enough with the Christianity's track record (not to mention the current goings-on of the Christian Coalition and other right wing religious freaks) that I don't need to detail all the ways in which an increased Christian presence in the punk community does not bode well for us. As a community of people who oppose many of society's repressive ideas, it seems clear that we don't need to welcome anyone into our community who will label homosexuality, premarital sex, saying words like "fuck," disbelief in a supreme immortal being, or in any way challenging the systems of power as a "sin." Most of us are into punk because it is a community that offers an escape from the nonsense we encounter in mainstream society, Christian or not. Most of us are into punk because it offers a way of looking at the world that makes a hell of a lot more sense than what we learned in school or in church. Why should we let a bunch of zealots into our community to undo all of that? Just because they've put a cool new face on Christian fundamen-

talism with piercings, tattoos catchy pop punk, or ripping hardcore riffs? Sorry, but I won't be led astray.

I know, you've heard it all before—you agree that Christianity is probably a bad thing, but you ask, "can't we all just get along?" Yes, and no. I bear no ill will to anyone for what they believe—it's what they do with that belief that matters. Any Christian interested in hearing a punk band is welcome in my house, as is pretty much anyone who agrees to treat everyone else at the show with respect. There is no test to see if you're punk enough to come in the door, nor should there be. But we're not for a second going to open our space to a missionary for a belief system that we think is fundamentally evil. Bands who use punk rock to convert people to the word of the lord are simply not welcome in our house, and they shouldn't be tolerated anywhere else in the punk scene. If people want to hear that crap, they can go to a church, not a punk show. Separation of church and punk, see?

People will tell me that punk is all about being open-minded, and that I'm not being very punk by demanding an end to Christian zealots using our community as a fresh pasture for developing a new flock. Apparently, they remain unconvinced by my previous points. Let me introduce the final nail in this crucifix; the point on which I simply will not budge, why Christianity (or any other major religion that I'm familiar with) is at its core, in opposition to one of punk's cardinal beliefs.

To me, the essence of any radical politics is an emphasis on the strength of people empowering themselves to create change. Empowerment can not be taught, nor given. It is the simple, inspiring act of someone asserting the power of her convictions and her commitment to act upon them. An organizer I know teaches that "Power is a good thing—such a good thing that everyone should have it." I've always felt that one of punk's most inspiring features is its belief in each person's power to make their own decisions, and to take responsibility for living in accordance with their understanding of what is right and wrong. By emphasizing the strength and ability in every one of us, we have created an environment of diverse opinion, phenomenal energy, creative art, committed activism, and strong community.

By contrast, Christianity demands that people cede any power to an inflexible hierarchy of bible, church, and minister, or god. A system of thought that requires that people deny their own feelings on morality in favor of pre-scripted notions recited from a book is fundamentally disempowering. By relying on a minister's interpretation of right and wrong, church-going people are willingly handing over their autonomy. By allowing "god," in whatever definition, to instruct them on the way to live their life, Christians have absolved themselves of responsibility in their own lives. If people choose to follow this path to salvation, I'm sad to hear it—though I won't stand in their way. But when the Christians send missionaries disguised as punk rockers into the punk community, preaching their disempowering nonsense, I get pissed. This is our community, and it does not exist for the pur-

pose of offering up an easy niche for bands who don't care about our community any more than the potential number of converts it offers for their growing army of zealots.

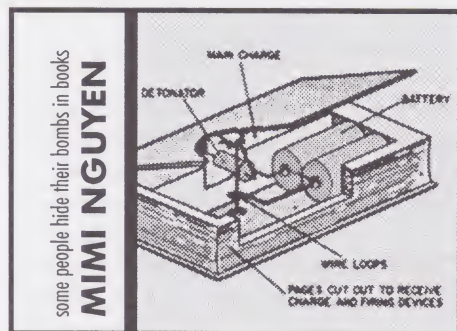
"It gets worse before it's over, and there's no truth in the clouds above, and no luck in clover. And I don't believe that I'd have it any other way." — Dillinger Four

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All you true believers should attend the Anarchist Book Fair in San Francisco on April 15th. Radical books for sale, and awesome speakers: Utah Phillips (who performs rarely—don't miss this chance to see him), Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Ruthie Gilmore, Starhawk, Craig O'Hara, Kevin Keating (of the Mission Yuppie Eradication Project, featured in PP # 30), Christian Parenti, Peter Plate, and more. Free admission! It will be held at the Hall of Flowers in Golden Gate Park. Contact 415.864.0892 or akpress@akpress.org if you want to know anything else. See you there!

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Browsing through cardboard boxes, I bought a library discard called *Customs and Culture of Vietnam* by Ann Caddell

Crawford, published some time in the early 1960s, a sort-of guidebook. (I always buy this stuff, old *LIFE* magazines with "exposes" on Viet Nam and garishly colored desserts, Third World travelogues with "tips" for dealing with "the locals.")

Apparently "comprehensive and authoritative," the book is typically full of pastoral descriptions and shoddy pseudo-anthropological observations, snippets like, "The first things that newcomers usually notice in Vietnam are the smiling faces of countless children, and the lovely fragile-looking women in their flowing dresses reminiscent of butterflies. The people are a gentle type who are shy, yet can be outgoing with foreigners, especially Americans." The Vietnamese are thus described as docile and submissive, never mind the lengthy history of native Vietnamese struggles to oust the Chinese, French, and Americans from the region, of course. (I roll my eyes.)

I flip to another chapter, the section on "costume," in which Crawford writes at length, "The women of Vietnam have, in my opinion, one of the most beautiful national costumes in the world. It is called the 'ao-dai.' The over-dress is form-fitting to the waist, with long tight dresses. At the waist, two panels extend front and back to cover the long satin trousers underneath. Correct fit dic-

tates that the pants reach the sole of the foot, and are always slightly longer than the dress panels. Occasionally lace is sewn around the bottom of each leg. Tradition has kept the color of the pants of the ao-dai to black or white.

"When a woman sits down, she takes the back panel, pulls it up and around into her lap. When riding a bicycle, they often tie the back panel down to the back fender to keep it from getting tangled in the wheels. Often, girls can be seen riding along the streets of Saigon on motor bikes with the back of their ao-dai flying loose, causing foreigners to comment that they look like butterflies, and beautiful ones at that."

"Many Americans have become so fond of the dress that they have some specially made to send home to their families. They make excellent hostess gowns."

It bears mentioning again (or more explicitly) that this book was written at the height of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia and that the author's husband was a U.S. Army officer assigned to the Military Assistance Command in Viet Nam. The appendices include "Useful Phrases in Vietnamese," some of which are too obvious: "Show me some identification," "The wound is infected," and "They are surrounded." These are, after all, the material and historical conditions that made it possible for suburban American housewives to sport the next new "exotic" look at their dinner parties, "reminiscent of butterflies" while serving casseroles and blood-red meatloaf.

Fashion has politics and (sometimes-bloody) histories, you know.

• • •

I lent my computer to Karina to finish a paper on the "mammy" figure as she's produced and circulated as a tourist commodity in Cuba, making her return as a nostalgic and immensely popular "kitsch" artifact of Cuba's sugar plantation past. Karina showed me pictures she took in Cuba of "mammy" figurines and cloth dolls dressed in colorful fabrics and overtly over-endowed—

occupying gift shop shelves next to porcelain white baseball players, practically the only black bodies you'll ever see (officially) in the tourist sections of Havana. (And never mind that most Cuban baseball players are black or mulatto.)

The corollary to the "mammy" is of course the "Jezebel," who also makes an appearance as a painted statuette—enormous bosom and buttocks, black as coal with thick red lips, in the picture Karina shows me she is a money bank. You put your pennies between her breasts or booty and watch them disappear. (It is an overt reference to the illicit sex industry that operates for the benefit of the mostly white European tourists to Cuba.) In Cuba the "mammy" even has a name—Inez, I think—and her own long history. In the photographs Karina took it seems that "Inez" is everywhere, and I wonder what is the meaning of her popularity (and her commodity production and consumption).

It's an odd, wrenching collision between history, amnesia and transnational capitalism. How do you look at a rag doll, made

over in a gendered caricature constructed out of slavery, sitting on a shelf in a tourist shop and not be struck by its totemic rememory of ships, sugar, and servitude?

• • •

I spend one afternoon in a cramped doctor's office in Oakland's Chinatown, straining to hear the words coming from the television, unable to read cartoon lips. Mark and I wait over an hour before he is called, sitting on slated wooden chairs and reading *National Geographics*. After a while the elderly Asian couples sitting with us no longer stare, each having returned to their own tasks (nagging, arguing, reading newspapers). One old man grabs a copy of *W* magazine to lay across his lap. I watch as the cover girl directs her glossy pout at him invitingly, staring unblinking through thick eyelashes. (Her hair is artfully tousled.) From out of his pocket he produces a pair of nail-clippers, and begins trimming his nails over her bared white cleavage. His clip-pers squeak like nails on chalkboards and make Mark wince.

Mark shows me a *National Geographic* full-color photograph depicting convicts (all black) with bags slung over shoulders in contemporary Louisiana, on work-detail in what looks to be a field, or farm. "They're picking cotton," he says grimly. We can't help but think backwards, recalling plantations and also-imprisoned black bodies bent over white bushes.

Is history ever just "past," really over? Recognizing the specific social circumstances, the ideological development and material differences hardly breaks the thread ñ just splits it, like a net cast wide.

I can't think in anything more than fragments lately, and unfocused and in disarray; I sit down to try to bang out one of the academic abstracts and essays I've got due in a week, two weeks, but nothing comes to me but these small punctures in my daily routine. For instance: a friend e-mails me a call for papers for a panel on women and trauma, and I come up with lists like this one.

And how many incidents like this do we encounter everyday? Do you even notice anymore, what sociologist Avery Gordon calls the "phantoms of modernity's violence"? (They are everywhere if you allow yourself to notice.) Did you think that the legacy of slavery was all but disappeared? Of war, human bondage, invasion or assault? There are at least a hundred cases on the books of Cambodian refugee women who have been struck blind out of thin air; health experts, finding no physical explanation, can only conclude that the blinded women are experiencing a psychosomatic reaction to the atrocities they witnessed under the Khmer Rouge. POW/MIA advocates continue to look for the phantom bodies of wronged patriots in Southeast Asia even while thousands of veterans are homeless "at home" in the United States, sleeping under freeway overpasses and in doorway stoops. States build memorials to some genocides and not others; grandmothers reveal tattooed numbers beneath polyester blouses; a woman pulls her coat tighter and walks a little faster, keys clutched in hand,

passing a particular alley in downtown Seattle; tango fever sweeps the nation while the U.S. role in Argentinean dictatorships and mass "disappearances" is swept under rugs; "Indian" mascots are claimed as common American heritage even as Native protesters are spit upon outside the gates.

We are so haunted; we are so used to it.

And a black girlfriend of mine offers a bag to an older white male bookstore customer, par for course in retail cashiering. He says in response, "No, but I could use a couple of Nubian slaves to carry these books out to the car."

Overwhelmed, still I'm a packrat: I catalogue every small instance, every stumbling bump I can. I try very hard to let every one of these ghosts inhabit my memory for at least a little while, if only to remember where they came from and that they still exist, as injustice also does.

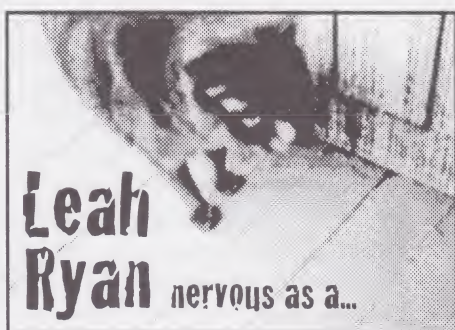
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Note to letter writers, et al. There is an enormous difference between critiquing a social and structural logic that abstractly privileges some bodies over other (such as, say, heteronormativity or, in the shorthand notation, "straightwhiteboy" hegemony) and making sweeping generalizations about the "character" of all individuals perceived as belonging to an identity category or group ("lesbian feminists are mean").

Note to "what about unity?" inquirers, et al.—What kind of unity is bought at the price of forced silence, policing, and exclusions? (It's so old school anyway.) Whose "common good" is served when we don't examine the politics of our rhetoric or our strategies? It's not a nuisance we can put off until that mythic "after the revolution," but a task that has to be constantly offered as a challenge to how we imagine we might "do" politics. Can we really avoid that kind of critical self-reflexivity by claiming to be "caught up" in the moment, that the times are too urgent to allow for an accounting of how we couch and conduct our actions? The race and class-based movements of the Left too often continue to insist that "we" need to close ranks against an imagined "outside," and all of a sudden I'm "outside" because I don't want to coalition with overtly homophobic nationalists or romance the ghosts of '70s radicalism. A student in my women's studies class wants to know if I think if women ran the world, there would be no more war. Mentioning Margaret Thatcher, Janet Reno, and Madeleine Albright, I point out that women can and do violence to other women in the context of uneven race, class and international relations. I'm not going to make another list here, but can we afford not to subject our politics to scrutiny? It's hardly too much to ask that we articulate our goals under pressure from each other in order to ensure that we democratize our politics.

• • •

On another note, I finished a new issue of my zine *Slander* and am still working on the project directory. Interested? Drop me a line at Mimi Nguyen / POB 11906, Berkeley, CA 94712-2906 / slantgrrrrl@hotmail.com



I have often said that food was the closest thing my family had to a religion. To take the metaphor a step further, a health food fanatic is as

unbalanced and obnoxious as a Jesus freak. They don't have enough information. They over-simplify and miss the point. Scratch the surface of many a pedantic vegan and you will find a childhood full of TV Dinners and a bland palate. Hippies have systematically ruined every ethnic cuisine they could get their hands on. They've taken ancient, perfectly viable and delicious (and cheap) dishes like the burrito and the falafel sandwich and rendered them inedible. Are they better for you this way? Maybe. But how can it be good for you if you can't even choke it down? There's nothing wrong with Middle Eastern food the way it is, which is why Middle Eastern people live to be 103. If you prefer brown rice and tofu to white rice and beef, that's fine. But don't call it Shish Kebab because I (and my Armenian ancestors) know better. If you're going to engage in that battle, you should at least arm yourself with the right information.

To illustrate, I'll use my friend's ex-boyfriend as an example. To protect his identity, we'll call him Mister Perfect. Now, Mister Perfect is not a hippie but a personal trainer, which may be worse. Of course he was on a no-fat lo-carb diet, and consequently, so was my friend. To protect her privacy, let's call her Glad He's Gone. So, Mister Perfect is, of course, perfectly sanctimonious about his diet. He's one of those people who believes that there's no ailment (schizophrenia, getting hit by a bus, etc) that can't be cured by the correct diet and plenty of exercise. Anyway, one day Glad He's Gone gave me an extensive description of the parameters of their diet. Some of it was obvious. No red meat, no dairy. Certain grains were okay and others were not. Bread of any kind was off limits for some reason, as was pasta. No white rice, but brown rice was okay. "I can't tell you," she sighed, "how sick I am of brown rice and cous cous." I was like, what? What does he think cous cous is made of? I explained to Glad He's Gone that when she and Mister Perfect sat down to a steaming plate of cous cous, they were eating pasta. It was no different from eating a pile of spaghetti. There are no organic whole-grain cous cous farms in Northern California. My friend's eyes got really wide when I told her this. "Oh my god," she said. "Don't tell him." Though I was dying to, I didn't. Fortunately they broke up shortly thereafter. I don't know how long I would have been able to contain myself.

Americans are strange creatures. They are willing to eat potato chips made with Olean, despite the fine print on the bag, which warns of such pleasures as "anal leakage." Why not just eat

fewer potato chips? A few potato chips won't hurt you. Just don't eat 3 pounds of potato chips a day.

Rather than freaking out about what color the food is, I think it one's time is better spent learning how to cook. That is, learning how to make really simple, cheap, healthy ingredients taste good. Nothing kills the appetite faster than a wagging finger in your face telling you what you should or shouldn't eat. Vegetarianism is probably a good idea, but it's not for everybody. Organic food is a great idea, but most people can't afford it. Low fat diets might be good for you, or they might make you sick as a dog. I think that food should taste good and that a varied diet is a good thing to shoot for. If you feel bad, you should think about changing your diet. But in general, if eating generic brand mac and cheese makes you happy, by all means, eat it. So long as that isn't the only thing you eat, I don't think you can die from it.

Having said that, let me now say that more and more Americans now grow up eating food that comes out of a box; just add water and throw in the microwave. There are some obvious reasons for this, most notably the insurgence of single-family and two-career households. It makes sense, but it's unfortunate for a few reasons. People have developed such an appetite for pre-fab food that it tastes better to them than real food. And sadly, people aren't learning to cook. When they leave the family nest, they maintain the eating habits of their youth and hover around the frozen food aisle of the grocery store, afraid to venture into the produce or international food sections because they're afraid they won't know what to do when they get there. It should be noted, also, that this type of person is a fanatic waiting to happen. When the kid who grew up on Big Macs, Shake'n Bake and Minute Rice grows up and gets religion, look out. This is a person whose palate is as bland as Air Supply. This is a person who thinks of soup mix as seasoning. Before they find balance, they will go overboard.

And balance, finally, seems to be the key. Americans are accustomed to having half a cow on their plate, beside a mountain of starch and some crappy overcooked dried out vegetable matter that nobody in their right mind would eat. Like the three pounds of potato chips analogy, it's just a kind of stubbornness about proportions that we have to get over. And in the meantime, Americans should prepare ethnic dishes with respect; learn something from them before you start messing with them too much. It might just be a case of "it ain't broke so don't fix it."

I've decided to do a cookbook 'zine (probably a one-shot, but who knows.) The concept is really simple. I want to compile decidedly unfanatical recipes, vegetarian, vegan and otherwise, with one overall criteria: the recipes will take into account that the cook has no fucking money. I have seen cookbooks that claim to operate under that assumption, but they're mostly bullshit. Either it's pages and pages of Jell-O and Frito pie, or their idea of "no fucking money" is really different from mine. I mean, like you have 20 bucks and it has to last the week. It's not just recipes, either, but creating a sense of self-sufficiency and preparedness

for when your temp agency stops calling or the freelance gig you thought you had in the bag falls through. If anyone has a recipe or some ideas or wants to help me out with some graphics, please feel free to write or email.

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List #1 (try not to go without any of these things)

Olive Oil: Feel free to skip the extra extra virgin stuff in favor of something cheaper. Maybe it's been around the block a few times but it's wiser for it.

Fresh Garlic

Pasta: Spaghetti, shells, whatever you like. It's nice to have a few different things.

Rice: Brown rice is fine if you like it, but don't be shamed away from white rice, which is a perfectly respectable thing to eat and takes less time to cook. Go for long-grain, and avoid words like "converted," "instant," and "enriched."

Dried legumes: Try to have a few different things, like lentils and black beans, for example.

Vinegar: white and cider are the cheapest.

Hot sauce: Goya makes a good cheap hot sauce

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Violation Fez #7, The School Issue, is still available. Send me a dollar, or your zine. c/o Leah Ryan, PO Box 2228, Times Square Station, New York, NY 10108. LEAHzz@aol.com.



Much like how the victors of war write the history texts, dominant cultures determine the ethical and moral values of the culture.

This holds true for antithetical values as well. Without the culturally mandated work ethic that says one must work harder to get more out of life, neither a protest of and/or resistance to this ethic would exist.

Another example is the punk subculture. Without a dominant value system enforced by status quo standards, punk's resistance to and/or protest of these standards and values would have never flourished in the margins of society.

The story of ethics and the protest of these ethics is nothing new. Punk is not writing a new story but rather a variation on a familiar theme, which can be demonstrated most notably in the discussion of class issues. Although punk claims its autonomous, do-it-yourself ethics are revolutionary in the

face of the dominant culture, punk as a values system in fact embraces the values of the dominant culture under the guise of discontentment. This is enacted in ways that are given little critical significance. For instance, when a punk business becomes profitable, there is no self-regulating mechanism in the autonomous, do-it-yourself business methodology that keeps the business from mimicking any other, non-punk business. Of course, what the business is about is obviously different, and there may be differences in values, such as in the amount of profit that is ethical, but the structure of the business ends up identical to any other business. Specifically, these businesses—punk and any other—are hierarchical in nature. A punk rock record label may, for instance, be a partnership between two people. The day that business hires on somebody to help out, for a wage that is less than what the partners are making, that business is no different than multinational corporations in that both kinds of businesses operate on hierarchical values.

When people ask why it is that punk rock is not revolutionary, I have many ideas I can support fairly well, but it wasn't until recently that I realized why it is that punk rock is not only *not* revolutionary, but, in fact, it is in complete compliance with what the dominant culture is all about. With the birth of agricultural-based cultures came the birth of hierarchies. The dominant culture most humans live within inherently delineates differences among people based on what they own and control. Punk rock is no exception.

In the early- to mid-'90s, independent punk rock record labels began to actually make money. Soon, punks were offended by the amount of money made by the owners of labels such as Epitaph, Fat Wreck Chords, and Lookout. These businesses are entirely entrepreneurial in nature and happened to be in the right place at the right time, much like how the godfathers of the industrial revolution prospered only on a different scale. Despite the often-violent tenor of the protest over these labels (of which I was involved on occasion), nobody raised the question of how it is these labels could prosper without being hierarchical in nature. Instead, the focus was on what sellouts they were, what assholes they were, and how much money they were making off the scene. Quite often punks would gladly jump on board with these businesses because the alternative—working at Starbucks or Kinko's—was less pleasing. At least they got to listen to punk rock all day while stuffing envelopes with CDs to send to zines and radio stations. Another approach was to adopt the Marxist view: Criticize labor and monetary inequalities within and outside of the punk subculture. It is in these critiques that magazines like the very one you are reading develop readership. And yet, within these critiques lies a bigger question which remains unanswered: Why does punk continue to follow in the norms established by the dominant culture?

The answer is in its description: Punk is a subculture. It is

not a new culture. It is a smaller culture within a culture, and thus, is subject to the standards of the dominant culture. Punk chooses to react to the dominant culture rather than to create for itself something that is genuinely new.

Since punk presents the illusion of deconstructing hierarchies, but as we've seen, has completely failed to do so, it could begin by acknowledging its lack of a common vision, and secondly, it could choose to operate without hierarchies within its own organizations. When successful punk businesses begin to delineate rank based on wages, they follow in the same vision that the Nike Corp. follows by hiring cheap labor outside of the U.S. Cheaper labor is cheaper labor. It makes no difference to me whether this labor is a warehouse worker at Mordam Distribution or a peasant in Thailand: One may be theoretically better off than another; both, however, are wage slaves. And both work for people who make more than they do.

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The fact is, we were absolutely brilliant at what we did

—Joe Strummer, on the early Clash, NPR 10/29/99

I know that in these modern times it's important to cultivate a positive self-image and not burden yourself with false modesty, but could Mr. Strummer please give me a break?

Were the Clash a great band? Of course they were. Did they headline one of the best shows I've ever seen in my life? Yes, they did. Did they leave a legacy of wonderful songs and memories that may well outlive all of us? Indubitably. Were they "absolutely brilliant" at what they did? Well, that depends on what he means.

If he's talking purely on the level of entertainment, excitement and good old-fashioned show business, then he's dead right. For the first two or three years the Clash were one of the most exciting live acts in the world. But then the same thing was true of Frank Sinatra, and for a lot longer than two or three years.

I get the uneasy feeling, though, that Strummer is talking about more than just his role as an entertainer. I can't help thinking he's also talking about the social and political revolution that the Clash were meant to be leading, or at least providing the soundtrack for, how they were supposed to be about much more

than just music, how they were marketed as "the only English band that matters."

I still have my flyer from the first time they played in San Francisco, January 1979, I think it was. Because of contractual reasons (hippie rock promoter Bill Graham had sewn up a decidedly non-groovy, non-peace and love arrangement where it was almost impossible for bands to play Frisco except in one of his venues), the name of the band wasn't on the flyers, just an easily recognizable silhouette photo from their first LP and that slogan, "the only English band that matters."

It was a DIY show in the days before punk rockers knew what DIY shows were. What I mean is that while many punk shows were DIY, there wasn't that consciousness of "doing something for the scene." It was more that if nobody put on a show, there wouldn't be one. People who openly talked about helping to "build the scene" could expect to be laughed at. Punks didn't believe in anything, not even themselves.

I exaggerate, of course. Even in the earliest, most nihilistic days, San Francisco housed a different kind of punk, the more positive, upbeat, constructive kind. It's probably because of all that leftover hippie heritage in the air. They were in the minority, sure, and they got made fun of a lot, but they were also the reason that San Francisco's punk scene kept growing and developing long after the more commercial scenes in LA and New York crashed and burned.

It was that kind of punks who put on the show at the Temple Beautiful, a disused Jewish synagogue on Geary Boulevard, next door to the building Jim Jones had made infamous as the People's Temple. It was a benefit, meant to raise money for a youth center and concert venue - sort of a Gilman Street nearly 10 years ahead of its time. A ton of money was raised and promptly disappeared without anything ever being built: it could easily be a fitting metaphor for the futility of the early punk scene in general and the Clash's version of it in particular.

The door price was right: three bucks, which even allowing for inflation was pretty good. When the Clash came back the following year to play one of Bill Graham's generic rock palaces, tickets were three or four times as much. All the opening acts were homegrown punk bands, one of them being my friend Don Vinyl's band, the Offs. Don was another of those hippies-turned-punks. When I'd see him up on stage snarling his way through a set of what many called the loudest and worst punk rock in San Francisco, it was hard to remember that when I'd met him in 1975, he was sporting long curly hair and invited me over to his house to listen to the new Jefferson Starship album.

The Offs later got into two-tone and ska and got pretty good—before, that is, Don snuffed it with a heroin OD—but tonight they were still in the loud and bad phase. I hadn't seen Don for a few months, but I bumped into him as he was headed for the stage. I gestured toward the crowd, which had now grown to a couple thousand, and said, "Things are really getting a lot

bigger, aren't they? How do you think it's all turning out?"

This was a conversation we regularly used to have, sort of a "Which way is the scene going?" kind of thing. But there was a special edge to my question tonight, which he sensed and dodged. It was partly the unsettling juxtaposition of swastika armbands—they were still quite stylish in those days—with the stained glass windows that featured the Jewish Star of David. It was the lurid red light that bathed the whole venue and made the black-leather and jackboot crowd look a little more sinister than your standard suburban nightmare. It was kids snarling and spitting and shoving each other with no sign that it was meant to be some kind of fashion statement. It was the dead-eyed 15 year old girls leaned up against walls with needles dangling from their arms.

I could see from the look on Don's face that a heavy conversation was the last thing he wanted right about then. It was partly because he was due up on stage, but I sensed a darker side to his reluctance, too. He knew that here, no matter how fucked up, no matter how self-destructive, was the audience he craved, that every aspiring artist craves. It might not be perfect, but it was his. He told me, "Hey, it's going great, isn't it? There's more kids getting into punk all the time."

I tried to press him on the question, "Yeah, but don't you worry sometimes where it's all going?" He was already pulling away from me, jonesing for the limelight. "Don't worry, it'll all work out. The kids know what they're doing."

Then he was onstage, and the Offs were really good, the best I'd ever seen them, and soon I'd forgotten my troubling questions, too, because the Clash were coming on. Everybody has their moments in life when the heavens open up and all the lights go on and all of a sudden they understand what rock and roll is all about, and this was mine. There were no great ideologies being preached, or cosmic revolutions in sound and harmony: it was really like nothing more than a good, rousing rock and roll dance down at the high school gym, but at the kind of high school we only wish and dream we could have gone to, the kind James Dean and Marlon Brando and Elvis Presley and Little Richard would have gone to if life were a rock and roll movie.

I had a similar sort of experience one other time, when the Ramones played Pauley Ballroom at UC Berkeley in 1980, but that was more wholesome, kind of like a '50s sock hop where everyone just danced themselves into a sweat-soaked frenzy with dazed and happy grins plastered across their faces. It was different when the Clash played. It felt more edgy, more dangerous, as if any moment the magic and fun could be shattered by a gunshot or the flash of a knife blade plunging in for the kill.

But the end result was the same: every song blended seamlessly into every other, and the whole thing dissolved into one of those eternal teenage dreams, the kind you're still having when they're shoveling you into the grave. On the basis of that show alone, the Clash deserve to live forever. If only they could have left it at that...

By the time the Clash played San Francisco again, things had

changed. The money raised from the Temple Beautiful gig had disappeared in a baffling whirl of accusations and (probably) drug habits. The all-ages youth center never did get started. Punk, or, more accurately, New Wave, had become big business, and there were shows nearly every night of the week. But there was still no band with the legend and mystique of the Clash, and they sold out two nights at Bill Graham's Warfield Theater.

Maybe it was just me, but it all seemed horribly wrong. For one thing, I'd gotten stuck up in the balcony, which was all theater-style seats, instead of down on the floor. But more importantly, the Clash seemed like just another rock band, doing the rounds to promote their latest album. For an opening act they brought out Mikey Dread, a Jamaican toaster who was semi-well known in England but a complete mystery to American audiences. His thing basically consisted of shouting incomprehensible Caribbean patois over reggae dub tracks, and was almost unbearable to listen to. Following him was an elderly black American R&B singer, Lee Dorsey, whose only hit ("Working In A Coal Mine") had been back in the mid-'60s.

Mikey Dread came across all surly, as if he couldn't care less whether anyone had any idea what he was on about; Lee Dorsey, on the other hand, was clearly thrilled to be singing in front of a large audience again, if a bit bewildered as to how this good fortune had come about. In the case of both acts, though, the unspoken message from the Clash seemed to be: "This is authentic roots music that you white kids need to be listening to whether you like it or not."

I was getting a more cynical message: not only were the Clash giving themselves some cred for dredging up these obscure black musicians, they were also providing themselves with some opening acts who a) were sure to make the Clash look good by comparison; b) would be suitably grateful for the work; and c) would probably work very cheaply.

Maybe it was only me being cynical. Maybe the Clash genuinely thought these guys were good, and that the American audiences would enjoy them, or at least benefit from being exposed to different kinds of music. Personally, I think it's a bit of both; the Clash, like many Europeans, probably did regard black music as intrinsically more soulful or "real" than anything that whites could ever do. At the same time, they couldn't have helped noticing that even the watered-down, bloated rock star version of the Clash that they now presented was blowing these supposedly more "real" black musicians right off the stage.

And it was watered down, it was bloated. They did all the "hits," including most of my favorites from "London Calling," and it left me totally cold. It was like watching a wind-up jukebox featuring your favorite Clash action figures. I walked out of there with a stomachache and never bothered seeing the Clash again.

Was I being too hard on them? Was I letting one mediocre gig stop me from enjoying what had been for at least a while one of the greatest rock and roll bands in the history of the world?

Probably. I was in a bad mood that night, and I was looking at everything, even the girl I was with, with a super-critical eye. But there was something more to it, too. I was holding the Clash to a standard that I'd never dream of holding most bands to, precisely because it was the kind of standard they'd set up for themselves.

When the Rolling Stones, a long-running candidate for "world's greatest rock and roll band," played a poor or embarrassing show, it didn't tarnish their image the same way, because they'd never made any bones about being anything *but* a rock and roll band. But when the Clash started becoming a mockery of themselves, when they started cranking out commercial schlock like "Should I Stay Or Should I Go," it hurt.

All these years later, I don't listen to my Clash records all that often. In preparation for writing this column, I went through the double-LP set of "London Calling" about three times, and that's probably the biggest single dose of the Clash I've had since the early '80s. Nothing blindingly new was revealed: the brilliant songs were as brilliant as ever, and the so-so songs just as so-so. One thing had changed, though: while the intro to "London Calling" was as catchy and intoxicating as ever, it had lost that apocalyptic edge that used to send chills right through my body. It was just another great pop song.

And that's the sort of thing I'd like to hear Joe Strummer talk about. We don't need him to tell us how great the Clash were—anyone with ears can figure that out for himself—or how exciting the late '70s punk era was—

those of us who were there can remember, and the younger kids have already imagined it into something even more exciting than it could have ever been. But we do need Strummer, and other survivors of that era, to make a stab at explaining how so many ideas and values could have gone so wrong.

Look at it this way: in the mid to late '70s, when punk burst upon the scene, there was a large leftist and anti-authoritarian movement in both Britain and the United States. Both countries had moderately center-left governments, and the public mood was, if a bit squishy, still generally tilted toward the idea of progressive and liberal social change.

Twenty-some years later, leftism is dead in the water, both Britain and the United States have endured long bouts of extreme right-wing governments, and even today's center-left governments would be considered fairly conservative by '70s standards. In short, punk's grandiose political schemes achieved less than zilch. If anything, society has moved in precisely the opposite direction.

Even today, what there is of a political movement within the punk scene consists of uncritically rehashing the 1960s: the same ineffectual protest marches and occasional riots, the same knee-jerk reactions and slogan-based policy. The only thing that's changed is that back in the '60s and, to a lesser extent, the '70s, people were still listening. Despite the aberration of Seattle and the WTO, the first time in years that a left-wing demonstration has gotten major

media attention, the attitude of the vast majority of Americans and Europeans towards the program espoused by self-styled punk "progressives" remains the same: it says nothing to them about their lives.

To some people, being "punk" is like being in love: it means never having to say you're sorry. Every generation has an element of this; some of you surely have parents who think nothing of any political and cultural significance has happened since the Beatles broke up, and to many people my parents' age, it's all been downhill since Roosevelt died. But what originally attracted me to punk was its iconoclastic nature, its need to question everything and believe nothing. When punks start getting smug and nostalgic and self-satisfied, they're worse than hippies, because the hippies started out as smug and nostalgic and self-satisfied. Punks were supposed to go one step beyond.

It's not often fun to look back on all the dumb things we did and the dumber things we said as we bumbling our way through life. But fun or not, it's absolutely essential that we do it. Life itself is nothing but a series of dumb mistakes punctuated, if we're lucky, by a few dazzling epiphanies. But those epiphanies, those revelations, those blinding moments of understanding that make all of life worthwhile, only come to those who are ready to honestly admit, to themselves and the world at large, that most of what they've ever said or done is nonsense.

Well-intentioned nonsense, sure. Glorious, uproarious fun nonsense, that too. The surest path to wisdom is the way of the fool. But as soon as we stop questioning ourselves, as soon as we start thinking that we've got it well and truly figured out and all we need now is for the rest of the world to catch on, our lives are essentially over. We're not going to learn anything new, we're not going to accomplish anything beyond building shrines to ourselves and stockpiling fame and fortune as bulwarks against the awful knowledge we can't bear to face: that we really still don't know anything at all. ☺



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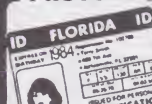
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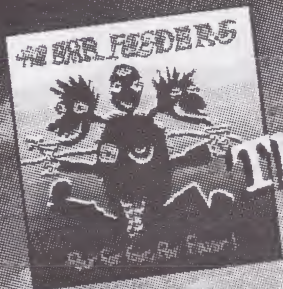
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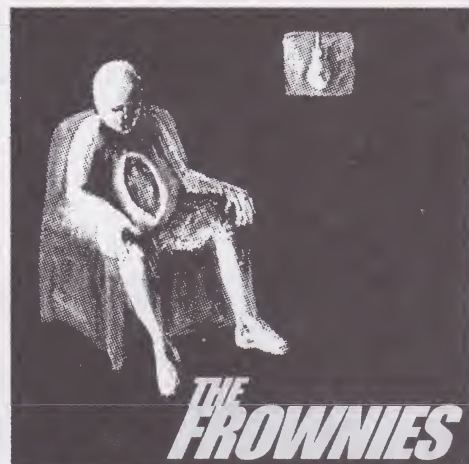
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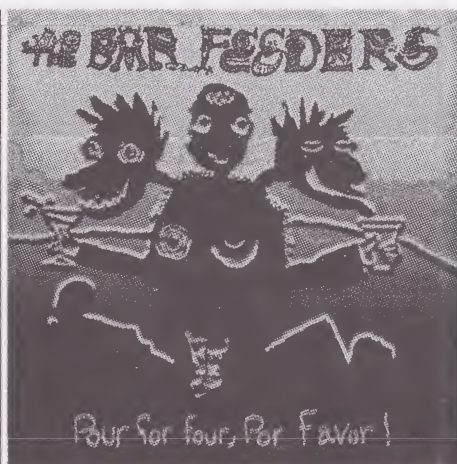
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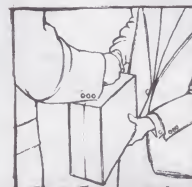
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It's hard to imagine the last decade of rock music history without Matador Records.

The back catalog for their American and European operations reads like a college radio Hall of Fame. Guided By Voices, Belle and Sebastian, Liz Phair, Unsane, Pizzicato Five, Teenage Fanclub, Sleater-Kinney, Pavement, Thinking Fellers, Cornelius, Unwound, Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Modest Mouse, and Yo La Tengo have all benefited from the label's magic touch. The startling thing about this list is the fact that every one of these artists has received considerable critical acclaim. As anyone with experience in the music business knows, getting positive press is half the battle. It's not enough to sign quality acts. You have to spread the word. And Matador has done an unbelievable job of it.

There are some who feel that Matador's success came at too high a price. For the better part of its ten-year history, Matador had a significant advantage over similar labels because of its major-label ties, first to Atlantic and then to Capitol. But now Matador is fully independent once more. The days when you could see a Superchunk video on MTV or hear Pavement on commercial radio are a distant memory. And rock is in the middle of one of its worst crises ever.

It's an odd time for an indie-rock label to be celebrating its 10th anniversary. But Matador has taken the bull by the horns, releasing a three-record set documenting the wide range of artists on its present roster. It's a testament to the label's aesthetic vitality that this collection is no memorial. It looks back—compiling tracks by some of Matador's best-known artists—only to look forward, making bands like Yo La Tengo and Guided By Voices sound fresh by juxtaposing them with newer artists. Probably the most striking thing about this release is the way in which it distances Matador from rock culture. Matador has never forced its acts into an aesthetic straightjacket. But what this collection makes clear is the extent to which the label wants listeners to perceive it as transcending any particular musical genre. Hard-edged punk and white-boy art pop à la Belle and Sebastian mix it up with a range of electronica and hip-hop. All in all, the effect is to position Matador as a player in the 2000s instead of a left-over from the 1990s.

Punk Planet recently had the pleasure of talking to Matador's co-owners Gerard Cosloy and Chris Lombardi about the label's past and future.

Interview by **Charlie Bertsch**

I thought
we'd start
with a nuts-and-
bolts question.
Could you describe
how you build your
roster of artists?

Chris: Something will
come across my desk; or
someone will be playing
something in the office; or
one of our bands will be
touring with some other band
and will tell us how great they
were; or Gerard
or I will



pick up a record in a
store; or something will
get sent by someone we
know. Then Gerard
and I will listen to it
and say "yay" or
"nay." And if one
of us says "nay,"
we don't sign
them.

Gerard: Suffice to say that Chris and I do
a lot of listening, a lot of sharing records,
a lot of arguing over those records and
more than a little bit of "what if?" fanta-
sizing. While Chris and I disagree from
time to time, we seem to have quite a bit
of common ground, as evidenced by the
overflowing release schedule.

With all the retrenchment in the music business
these days, the rumor mill is flying fast and furi-
ous. Is Matador doing alright financially?

Chris: Yes.

Is it true that Matador US laid some people off
recently?

Chris: Yes. We have reorganized. We had
a lot of support staff. Half this
company spent half their time
in Los Angeles educating
another company about
how to sell records that

were fairly commer-
cial. And we needed
people to push paper
around here. What
we're doing now is hiring
and promoting people to
become more project man-
ager-oriented. We have 20 artists
and released 29 albums last year and
the fact is that we need people who can be
there to hold the artists' hands. Nearly 95%
of our groups don't have management. It's
almost like we're building a management
team to deal with the artists. In terms of our
restructuring, we had very broken-up depart-
ments and now we're combining them.

So you're not downsizing, you're resizing.

Chris: Right. In the end, our head count in
New York will have gone down by two, from
31 to 29. There was a rumor that we were
going to ax half the staff and shit like that.
And it's like, "Fuck it. Let everyone gossip."
Especially since we've survived for so long,
people like to badmouth us. It's so fucking
stupid. We put out good records. We've
always been fair to our artists. We've
always been fair to our employees.

We probably have the most
relaxed working atmos-
phere of any

company around. We have very, very happy
employees. The fact that people are wasting
their breath on the ins and outs of an inde-
pendent record label is ridiculous. They
should be discussing what great records we're
putting out.

One of the things that doesn't come up often
enough in the world of independent music is
that there are so many ventures which have
an aura of authenticity, even though the peo-
ple doing most of the work don't get paid
adequately for their labor. But that's not true
of Matador, right?

Chris: Exactly. Our employees get dental
and medical. And we pay for it, not them.
Not only that, when we did our deals with
Atlantic and Capitol, everybody here got a
little piece of the action. I think that's say-
ing something.

I've always been impressed by the fact that
Matador has a lot of artists who aren't American.

THERE'S NO PARTICULAR MATADOR SOUND. I DON'T THINK

Chris: We've always been globally focused.

Gerard: Some of our earliest signings
were artists from exotic locations like New
Zealand, Glasgow and Vancouver. Well,
one out of three isn't bad!

Chris: We signed whatever we liked. To
give one example, there wasn't necessarily
a particular scheme to focus on Japan. It's
just that there are some great groups com-
ing out of there. We signed Pizzicato 5
over five years ago. Working with them
increased our relationships and visibility
there. And we ended up in getting in
touch with Cornelius, who was friends
with the Pizzicato 5 people. It was kind of
natural in that instance. And, as Gerard
pointed out, Teenage Fanclub was one of
the first groups we signed. Internationally,
we've always been very broad-minded.

In terms of the American independent music
scene, not many labels have made much
effort to become international.

Chris: I would actually say that *no* labels
have. The funny thing is, working with some
of our major-label partners in the past, we
realized that they weren't much better. You
saw the lack of synergy between their sub-
sidiary companies. Here you'd have EMI,

British-based, but which has a very successful company Capitol Records or Virgin Records in the States, yet they never really shared their artists. Or there was frustration because an artist did well in Germany, but no one really wanted to break that artist in England or America or Japan. By contrast, since Gerard and I are like-minded in our efforts, we find interesting groups that will work well in most places. We sign artists around the world who fit into our roster's general feel. We've always been eclectic in our tastes, but you can put Cornelius next to Solex. Even though one's from Amsterdam and one's from Japan, Solex has been to Japan and sold records and Cornelius has been to Amsterdam and sold records there too.

Do you think this internationalist approach helps Matador to break free of the provincialism that besets a lot American labels?

Gerard: I'm not sure I understand what

regional point of view. We are a New York label. And we did have a number of New York artists early on, basically because the New York scene was very vital, very vibrant and we signed people who were friends of ours. But we bought records from all over the place. Most of the groups we've signed did not come from someone sending us a demo. We've usually signed artists who have released a 7" or released a record on their own or on a very small indie like Pavement, who had put out singles on their own and a 10" on Drag City. And, of course, they were from the West Coast. So were the Thinking Fellers. I don't think we ever thought of ourselves as being a New York label that represented the New York rock scene.

How has being located there affected the label's development?

Chris: I'm a proud New Yorker. I love the city. I think our location does give us an edge

Chris: Initially there was only one employee, then two employees, and now, with Gerard over there, six employees. We used to have trouble signing European bands for the world. An English band would be like, "Great, but in Europe your presence isn't strong enough, so we want to sign with Domino."

Gerard, have you've learned anything interesting about the perception of Matador and, more broadly, the American independent music world, during your time in the UK?

Gerard: I don't feel comfortable presuming how anyone else perceives this label or American independent music, whether they are from the UK or anywhere else. I don't know for sure how the label is perceived in the US, either. I assume some people like us, some don't, some are into individual artists regardless of label affiliation and the vast majority of the population have no idea who we are.

WE'VE EVER BEEN PROVINCIAL FROM EITHER AN AMERICAN OR REGIONAL POINT OF VIEW. WE ARE A NEW YORK LABEL.

you mean by the "provincialism" of other American labels. Kill Rock Stars, with the Hangovers; Merge, with Third Eye Foundation and Ganger; Touch & Go, with Uzeda and The Ex; Drag City, with Ghost and Dirty Three; and Thrill Jockey, with Toshimaru Nakamura—all these labels are quite involved with music from other places, and those are just examples I can think of off the top of my head. And a "provincial" label like Dischord seems to work mostly with its friends—which is fine, if your friends are talented musicians—but their influence in anything but provincial.

Point taken. But I can't help but feel that Matador is particularly cosmopolitan. Sure, most of the better-known American labels have bands from overseas. But the scope of their internationalism is more modest than your own. Maybe a better way of approaching this topic is to focus on what Matador is not. I don't get a sense that you're tied to a particular music community in the way that Kill Rock Stars or Merge or Touch & Go are. In other words, although those labels may not be "provincial" in a pejorative sense, they don't seem as resolutely anti-provincial as you do.

Chris: That I can see. There's no particular Matador sound. I don't think we've ever been provincial from either an American or

in being a more internationally-oriented company as opposed to a Minneapolis-based company. Maybe not everybody gets to go through Minneapolis. Maybe you don't get to see every band when they're on tour. But pretty much every band plays New York at one time or another. So that certainly has been a help for us in our A&R. And being in New York doesn't hurt our publicity either. You've got to admit that when something happens in New York, it's national news. It's like that slogan, "if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere." I mean, people do sort of stand up and pay attention to what goes on in New York.

What's going on with Matador Europe? It seems to have a bigger profile as of late, but maybe that's just because Gerard is living in the UK.

Chris: Matador Europe is something we started about three years ago. Originally we had used a promotions company there. My concept was never to license product to other territories or other labels.

Gerard: We've been fortunate to work with some tremendous artists and labels via licensing, but we'd prefer to work directly with the artists themselves. So we're trying to take advantage of the infrastructure we already have in place in the UK.

Does the distance from the US help you perceive what's going on there in a new light?

Gerard: I couldn't possibly claim it helps—spending most of my time in London means that I'm *less* likely to hear or see new things that are happening in the US, no matter how hard I try to keep up with records, books, films, you name it. On the other hand, I tend to find out about things that are happening here—or in the rest of the continent—a bit faster than I did when I was living in New York, so it all tends to even out. It isn't something I worry about an awful lot—there are still plenty of new records and new US-based artists that I'm excited by.

Matador just celebrated its 10th anniversary. There isn't much precedent for an indie label to have done so well for so long...

Gerard: It is flattering and kind that anyone thinks our label is special enough to analyze, but all we've really done is put out records we like. The individual records and specific artists are much more important than the label.

What about the business end? A lot of labels have been going through hard times in the wake of the post-alternative consolidation of the industry.

Chris: We're very cautious about how we do business here. We don't take huge chances on things. We have a certain model that we work off in terms of marketing and expenditure. But I think one of the reasons we've succeeded as long as we have is the eclectic nature of the company. We haven't been stuck with one particular sound. You can only be hip for so long. So if you're attached to one particular genre—grunge rock or garage rock or hip-hop or whatever—you're going to eventually run into trouble.

Gerard: Within the general confines of "underground rock," our label is sort of eclectic, but it isn't for me to say if we are or aren't more special than any other company. Our "aesthetic vision" is something for others to ponder. We're just music fans who like more than one thing.

WE TRY TO FOSTER A CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT WHERE THE ARTISTS WE LIKE CAN MAKE THE SORT OF RECORDS THEY WANT AND WHERE THE

Obviously there are musical genres not represented on our roster. We completely missed out on the hate-edge thing!

Chris mentioned hip-hop. One of the interesting things about the 3-record collection you put out to celebrate your 10th anniversary is that it foregrounds your forays into that genre. What led you to diversify in that direction?

Gerard: I wish we had been putting out hip-hop records a long time ago. The problem was, we didn't know where to start!

Chris: I think we were afraid about how to approach it.

Gerard: We weren't going to sign a hip-hop artist just so we could have a generic hip-hop signing. And it wasn't as though we were going to find an innovative, unsigned hip-hop act by just sitting around and waiting for one to come to us. So we ended up getting involved with hip-hop—on a business level, at least—the same way we got involved with the famous indie rockers on the label. We bought records, played them to death and found out that our favorite group—who had already released a bunch of indie singles—didn't have a deal for an album. The parallels between the way The Arsonists and the way Pavement came to the label are uncanny—if parallels can be uncanny.

Chris: Our strategy was that we could sell independent, underground hip-hop as well

as we could sell independent rock records. The same stores that are buying our Blues Explosion records are also stocking hip-hop records. The same kids are buying them. Now when we're marketing a band like The Arsonists, we do embrace a hip-hop model in terms of street teams and advertising in magazines where we normally wouldn't. But we're also very focused on making sure that the readers of local weeklies and rock magazines also know about our hip-hop artists.

Another advantage to being in New York, from the perspective of hip-hop, is that music culture doesn't seem to be quite as racially stratified there as it is elsewhere in the US, and the independent music scene in particular is more hybridized.

Chris: Yes. I think that's what we're concentrating on. Think of the Dr. Octagon releas-

es—that's hip-hop that draws a wide range of listeners and it's focused on a more educated, college rock kind of audience. In terms of the more mainstream hip-hop magazines, they actually ghettoize great, underground, creative music because of the fact that, at this point, rap has become so powerful in its largess. The really good indie stuff is ignored. The kids who are putting out great records that sell 10 or 15,000 copies or whatever are completely ignored by the mainstream hip-hop media. It's much the way it was with the rock media in 1989. No one was writing about Soul Asylum, or Sonic Youth, or Big Black, or the Butthole Surfers, even though they were selling 10 or 15,000 copies. Instead, the media was focusing on Poison or Guns 'n Roses. And that all changed in the beginning of the 90s. That's where I think hip-hop is right now. It's in a place where the whole underground hip-hop genre will explode much in the way that indie rock did when we started the label.

Matador started as an indie label and you're back to being an indie label. But for a good portion of the 1990s you had a relationship with a major, first Atlantic and then Capitol. Looking back on that period, how do you feel about it? Do you have regrets? Do you think it was necessary?

Chris: I think in both cases it was a valuable relationship in the sense that we were able to sign the artists that we wanted to and also

learn to become a real company. We became more organized. I didn't go to business school. Gerard didn't go to business school. We were shooting from the hip a little bit. And working with a large corporation, with business managers, lawyers etc., I think we got to be more professional and build a company that had great systems and great staff. And we got to have better distribution for a while, even though I think independent distribution is quite good these days. But ultimately, the purpose for having those relationships was not solely to build the company, but to use the manpower that these larger, national companies had for promotion. The fact was that, from 1993-1997, I think there was a lot of promise in the idea that the listening public was going to become more and

more experimental in its taste and that you'd be able to hear not only Liz Phair, who was probably our most commercial artist, but also Pavement, Blues Explosion and other bands on mainstream radio. That seemed to be the way that radio and video were going. But they didn't end up going that way. So the promotional muscle of Atlantic and Capitol ultimately became unnecessary, because we make non-mainstream music.

It's interesting that you bring about professionalism because that's one of the first things that strikes me about Matador. Gerard, you worked at Homestead Records in the '80s. I'm curious if your experience there influenced the way you approached Matador. What did you decide to do differently?

Gerard: I think we decided to make sure that the bands were paid for the records they sold. And that the contracts we wrote specified our obligations to the artists, not just their obligations to the label. Almost from the start, Matador was much more ambitious commercially—not in terms of the musical content, but the way the releases were promoted and marketed—than Homestead, even when Matador had little financial backing to speak of. The big difference between Matador and Homestead

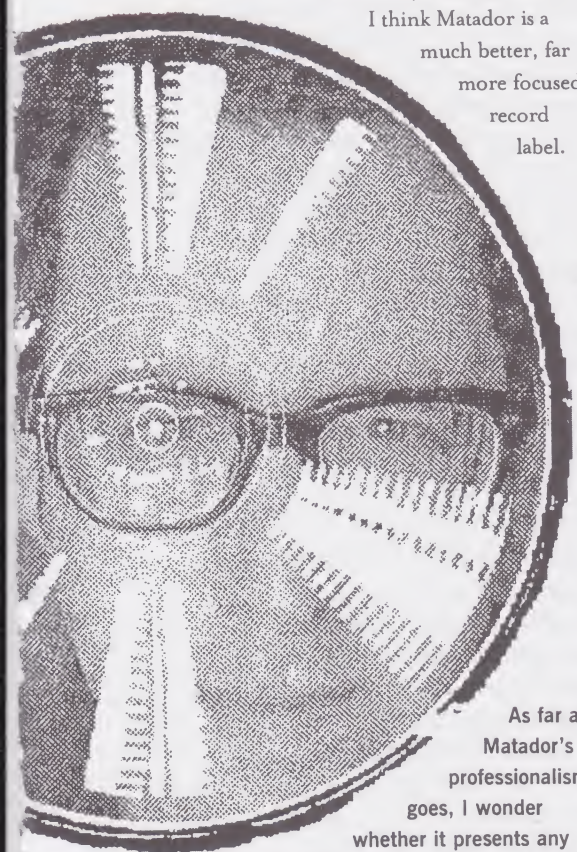


is that Homestead's ownership did not have a very high opinion of the label, the artists, the two-person staff or the people who purchased the records. Even if you don't have very much money, it helps if you believe in what you're doing. We do.

Did you carry anything over from the Homestead days?

Gerard: Not very much, though I'm sure you can find a few musical links and bits of the old sensibility seeping through.

I think Matador is a much better, far more focused record label.



As far as Matador's professionalism goes, I wonder whether it presents any ideological problems. There's a tendency in the independent music scene to exalt seat-of-your-pants amateurism. I suppose some people might accuse you of being too corporate. Do you perceive a tension between "professionalization" and the commitment to stay true to the music?

Gerard: I don't see a contradiction in combining "professionalism" and staying true to the music—most of the artists we represent consider themselves to be professionals. At the same time, "professionalism" in and of itself doesn't count for much. We could be much better organized than we are now, but if the records weren't interesting and we didn't have any musical

knowledge—or have a clue how to reach an empathetic audience—it would make no difference. There are plenty of "professional" indie labels, though not all of them are worth paying attention to.

Did you see contradictions in your major-label partnerships?

Chris: I never entertained the indie vs. major argument. I felt that if anybody went back and looked at what we accomplished—who we signed, who we worked with, who we hired—during the time we were affiliated with a major label, I don't think anybody could accuse us of selling out in any way.

I don't think many people would dispute the quality of your releases. But the animus against major labels is rooted in a worldview that goes beyond the music itself. It's a question of principle.

AUDIENCE'S INTELLIGENCE IS RESPECTED, WHICH SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH PANDERING TO ITS TASTES.

Chris: And I can appreciate that. But I think music should be written about because it's good.

Gerard: I do see a contradiction in putting out intelligent, highly personal music and using the same means and venues of presentation that you would for hawking cosmetics, bubblegum, heroin, etc. I'm not against marketing, but things like web sites, consumer advertisements and posters should be thought-provoking—otherwise, why bother? A question I often ask myself when we are discussing marketing plans is, "If I wasn't already a fan of this artist, what could be done to make me curious?" I'm not interested in what could be done to make the hypothetical "average person" curious. If we can't relate to the interests of record buyers—and we should be able to, because we're all music fans—none of it really works. A band is better off putting out their own records than they are working with a label that doesn't know who their fans—existing or potential—are or is too lazy to learn.

Chris, when you were talking about your major-label partnerships you were contrasting the mid-1990s to the present. I'd like to hear your current assessment of the music industry.

Chris: The state of commercial music right now is so sickly and so depressing that I honestly have faith that through the

internet—MP3s, on-line magazines, chat rooms—people are going to be more inquiring and more educated about what good music is out there. Because the m.o. from the majors is only to release multi-multi-platinum artists. They've slimmed down their staffs. They've cut their rosters. It's only going to be about one-hit wonders. There isn't the same loyalty towards rock and roll anymore. People move on. They have one or two songs that they link on an album. No one goes out and buys the next record. It's not about building careers. That's something that we've always been proud of: we didn't shove shit down people's throats, we tried to get our records out to as many people as possible, we never compromised our artists' integrity, and we always wanted to

have artists build their careers so they could play in front of more people and have more people buy their records.

I can't really find fault with that approach, but it is rather limited in scope. There's a difference between building careers and building a community. Is Matador a purely aesthetic venture—one which also seeks to make some money—or do you also see it as something more? In other words, is there a political dimension to your work?

Gerard: My own politics aren't necessarily those of Chris, my other co-workers or the artists on the label. So without going into unnecessary detail about that stuff, I'd like to think the non-specific Matador ideals are quite simple: We try to foster a creative environment where the artists we like can make the sort of records they want and where the audience's intelligence is respected, which should not be confused with pandering to its tastes. How any of that is supposed to be a sure-fire formula for making money is anyone's guess. It's a pretty shitty formula when you really think about it. But it isn't as though our business plan has some smoking gun you're not being told about. We put out records we like and we assume that others will like them as well. ©

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I want to have fun. I want to have SEX. Let's be creative about it and open up a little.

xLIMPWRISTx

"Pile up to sing along, our sweaty bodies in unison, while your hands slip their way to my crotch, while the band played our song." With lyrics like these, it's not hard to figure out what Limpwrist's agenda is all about. This all-gay, all-straight-edge band loves hardcore boys, and they love boys hardcore.

Fronted by lead singer Martin Sorrondeguy, who many may remember from the seminal Latino hardcore band Los Crudos, Limpwrist weds the spastic sounds of old school East Coast straightedge punk with the campy, sex-positive lyrics that one might expect at a Homocore show. Although together for only a few months, the band has already recorded an album and played a slew of shows to enthusiastic crowds. Their popularity may be influenced in part by the novelty of an all-queer straightedge band, but probably more so by Martin's well-known method of extreme audience engagement. Martin is talkative, witty, intelligent, and, as in Crudos, he demands the participation of the crowd. As in his Crudos days, Martin articulates the meaning behind every song. Although with lyrics like "Why do you think we want you in our crew/Just cuz you got dick it doesn't mean you'll do/Limpwrist recruits, yeah fuck you," the band will never be accused of subtlety or condescending sophistication.

At their show in Chicago in early December, 1999 there was a general feeling of goodwill and excitement. Prior to the gig, Martin handed out lyric sheets—hand-typed lyrical manifesto adorned with appropriated Tom of Finland images doctored to parody straight-edge iconography. Although Martin's lyrical approach is blunt and decidedly scene-oriented, Limpwrist smartly decodes the subtext of homoeroticism that fuels the overexcited male energy of a hardcore show. His lyrics subvert the over-zealous declarations of brotherhood and unity that run rampant in the hardcore scene—declarations that all us queer kids have, at one time or another, in a crowded, sweaty pit, appreciated the irony of. This conversation took place with Martin one afternoon a couple weeks after the show.

Interview by Sean Capone



How did Limpwrist come about?

I was talking with our guitarist Mark—he had recently come out and been in some previous bands—the topic of homocore came up. We were saying how there were lots of homo bands, but where was the core? We thought it was a good idea to start a full-on hardcore punk band that was all gay. And since we were both straightedge, we figured we'd just push it really far and do a full-on hardcore straightedge band. We were trying to think of who else could be in it, and we thought of Andrew from Kill The Man Who Questions, who I knew was also gay. There was the issue of the drummer—I thought I would have to drum as well, but we found a kid in Philly who heard about the project and really wanted to be a part of it.

Comparing this to the work you did in Los Crudos, it seems the lyrics are much more blunt and campy, as well as less political and more scene-oriented. Why the shift?

In Crudos, we addressed a lot of things but this was the one part of my life that was lacking. I love music, I love Crudos and people were probably expecting something more like that, but there is another side to me and I'm sure that it was kind of a shock to most people. The lyrics are very scene oriented, but our target is the scene, since we are so involved in it, and I think it's something that's needed. After so many years of the hardcore scene being dominated by a sexuality that refuses to acknowledge itself, we needed to finally reclaim some of it for ourselves. It is really loud, and aggressive, and speaks to the punk scene—but not so much that someone coming in from the gay scene would not be able to come in and appreciate it. It's us trying to have a voice, to be clever and approach the situation creatively, but as far as larger issues go, it is a new project and over time we hope to incorporate other elements and address other areas. But mainly, it's about being out, loud, vocal and putting forth what I think is important, whatever it is about myself—my outness, my latinoness. I'm not gonna sit around and worry about someone else doing it for me.

You came out on stage before an audience when you were in Crudos. What motivated you to come out so publicly?

I think it's unhealthy to close yourself up. My goal is to be sexually open—not to offend anyone, but to deal openly with my sexuality. I think it's because those issues are so closed in the scene that a lot of people drop out. In a scene where sex talk is criminalized and feelings are policed and repressed, people try to maintain unrealistic expectations and you get to the point where you need to explore those feelings, especially when you're young. I'm all about positive sexuality and expressing a positive viewpoint about being gay and out. I'm not up there saying "we're queer, we're lonely, we're oppressed blah blah blah," you know? Fuck that. I want to have fun. I want to have sex. Let's be creative about it and open up a little. Sex is not a negative thing, but in the scene it's seen to be. I think that's why a lot of people leave it, but we shouldn't be compartmentalizing all the parts of your life. We shouldn't say "This is my punk side," or "This is my sexual side." The scene should be an open space where people of *all* types should feel welcome to explore their feelings regardless of who they are or what they look like. The punk scene is not set up to emulate the beauty standards of popular culture. For example, a big, hairy straight boy might hear me say the things I'm saying and start to feel good about himself, despite how good he thinks he looks or what others think of him. We're trying to embrace that, so that maybe many non-gays appreciate what we're doing.

Do you think that a sexual agenda might be alienating to people who aren't used to thinking about it? Is the punk scene ready for the sexcore movement?

I think hardcore *has* had a sexual agenda all along—it tries so hard to appear asexual but it's really a very heterosexually dominant scene. We're not involved in the homocore scene fully—well we are in certain ways, but we're really more involved in the larger dominant hardcore scene. I think queer people in punk have

been alienated for years now, so am I worried about alienating the rest of them? I don't know.

Although you call yourselves a straightedge band, the musical style doesn't really reference what one thinks of as the straightedge sound—there are no youth crew mosh parts with big buildups. Your sound is more chaotic and noisy and punkish, don't you think?

We're not really into the latter-day straightedge sound, we don't really like metal. We're going for an early hardcore sound, like old school Boston or East Coast stuff. That's the straightedge I've always related to more—back when at shows it was everybody under one roof, not a sub-scene within a scene that's only for the kids that are really into it. No one's really doing the old-old-school stuff these days. Nowadays "old-school" means like '92-'93. As far as referencing that sound in our music, the live show is really noisy, but you'll hear it more on the recording, the sing-alongs and stuff like that. And parodies of that sound are OK. We should write a song called Girth Crisis. [laughs]

What about Mouthpiece, that's a great name! Or Better Than a Thousand Blow Jobs, or Ten Inch Fight.

[laughs] Actually I really like those bands like Ten Yard Fight and Better Than a 1000. They're doing that sound really well. I'm anti a lot of the current straightedge stuff, but I'm not anti-straightedge. Straightedge caters to this intense male bonding and as for us, it's like "OK, we'll play along with your brotherhood thing!" We're all about it like you can't believe! This macho scene that exists is overtly homoerotic, and we can find comfort within that scene that might seem uninviting because of its over-the-top macho flexing.

Why the name Limpwrist? What's the significance of using that stereotype?

At first we came up with these absolutely horrible names. Mark wanted the name Crushskull. We were talking on the phone and he came up with Crushskull. Instantly I was like, "Let's call it Limpwrist." C'mon listen to it, it sounds way hardcore. Say it

This macho scene that exists is overtly homoerotic, and we can find comfort within that scene that might seem uninviting because of its over-the-top macho flexing.



fast, it sounds like a crazy straightedge hardcore name with all the other meanings attached to it. It clashes with everything you associate with hardcore. The majority of the scene is so hetero and macho it seemed perfect to call the band Limpwrist. The intention was that the band was not being subtle.

Overall the punk scene does not have many gays and lesbians in it. Do you think the community is unwelcoming, or that young gay people are unaware of it in lieu of the mainstream gay community?

Young gay people... Think about them, where they're coming from. For example, *XY* magazine is fairly new. It's a magazine about the lifestyle of being an out, young, gay person and probably everyone in the country is getting it and reading it. That's just amazing, I love that—the idea of young gay people being visible is a new idea. Punk has an element of unattractiveness to it, and with young people coming out and coming to terms with their sexuality and needing to belong to something that's inviting, I don't think that they'd really want to jump right into the punk scene. The idea of rejection or nonconformity to society is not appealing to a young gay person who's coming out and doesn't need to feel that sense of alienation. But in the '70s, the punk scene was loaded with gays and androgyny. It was actually like the thing, it was common. The '80s did a real number on the gay presence in punk...

...with the emergence of hardcore and death of style and humor.

And homocore stuff was so hard to find, even if you were gay, there was no outlet

for this stuff. I remember hearing about Bruce La Bruce and JD's and stuff like that, but you couldn't find it anywhere. You're talking about a sub-culture, openly gay, and punk, burying yourself to where its unrecognizable. Plus, an early issue I had with Homocore was that they did no all-ages shows, they were all 21 and up so that cut a lot of potential people off. But it's gotten better now, I guess.

I've come to the conclusion that there's something fundamental about the scene that is repellent to most young gays. I used to think, "OK, there's just not a 'safe space' for them here." But you create one, and it's just like, "Where the hell is everyone?" How many queers do you think were at the show tonight? Why were they so reluctant to shout it out when you asked who there was queer?

[Thinks for a minute] I know for a fact 15 at least. Really loosely—starting at 15, not counting the people who claim to be bisexual. I don't understand why they wouldn't shout it out. If there was anytime they safely could have, it was there. People don't like to be singled out, they're shy. You don't know their position, like who else might be there that they'd rather didn't know about them. Limpwrist is just gonna be out there—we're gonna be there for those people that can't be as vocal.

Why do you think the Homocore movement never exploded the same way, for example, that riot girl or pop punk did?

Well, homocore's been a part of the Chicago scene for a long time now. But I don't think it was gritty enough, or punk enough. Like when you think of homo-

core, you think of bands like Pansy Division, who's really just not punk enough for me—there's not enough edge to them. They do interesting things like with their record covers and live shows but musically, it's not enough for me. That's what we're trying to do—more aggressive and edgier hardcore. We're trying to give this image, everywhere we go, that Limpwrist has a monster crew of gay punks in every city.

What's your opinion on where we stand as gays & lesbians today?

Not in a place I feel too good about. I want to say, "Why are you trying so hard to be accepted by all these fucking jerks, who've been so horrible to you for so long?" The gay community has really softened up so much in trying to prove that we're normal and not freaks. They're trying to buy the world's approval. I mean, there are elements that are great and others that don't do it for me—or a lot of other people—at all. In the process of normalization, a lot of people end up slipping through the cracks in the mainstream. Like drag queens and transgendered people—they were at the forefront of the movement, the fist of the movement. The gay community wants so hard to prove that we're not freaks, so they're getting cut out because of the mainstreaming. But it seems that the younger groups that are forming are more conscious, they're including that "T" at the end of the "GLB" to be more inclusive and effective making sure that people don't slip through the cracks. ☺

20 QUESTIONS WITH THE ZINE STOP BREATHING

1. How long have you been doing your zine and what issue are you on?

I've been doing a fanzine, in some shape or form, since I was 15—so that would make it six years now. I've been doing *Stop Breathing*, specifically, for almost three. I'm on issue eight.

2. How long do you plan on doing it?

For a long while I was convinced the next issue would be it for me. For the first time in all of the years I've done this, I really heeded closing up shop—until I realized what a terrible condition that is to work under. Does waiting around for your predetermined demise sound like a good thing to you? I guess I can't say for certain how long I'll be here, but my bet is that it'll be a while.

3. What would cause you to quit?

I'd love for it to be something romantic. I'd love to quit because I had accomplished everything I could with this monster. But, the reality of it is, I'm sure I'll call it a day for all the typical reasons, like growing old.

4. How do you distribute your zine?

Tower, Bottleneck, Desert Moon, Revolver, Ubiquity, Lumberjack—you know, all the basics. It's actually one of the less concerning aspects of the 'zine these days. As it is for most 'zines, in *SB*'s early stages, distribution was such a bitch. I tend to miss those days, though. There was a certain charm to begging people like Davey von Bohlen to sell them at Promise Ring shows or pestering cynical record store clerks.

5. Why is your zine called what it's called?

There's no fanciful impetus behind the 'zine's name. I decided to call it *Stop Breathing* because that's the name of a song by a band I really like—well, it's more than that actually, but the real reason is actually quite dull. Just forget it.

6. What were the runner-up names for your zine?

"This Is Where I Wait For The Bus" and "Fuck The Kids." I also considered "Jackals, False Grails: The Lonesome Era" for a while, but realized that might be a mouthful.

7. What would you rank as the three main subjects you cover?

Music that matters, why that music matters and grammatical errors.

8. What's the hardest part about doing your zine?

Spending more time on a computer than with the people you love; establishing an agreement with your body that states, "We don't really need sleep;" When Puffy won't return your calls.

9. What is the most rewarding part?

Michael Stipe once told a reporter that when REM were recording *Murmur*, he had no clue how being in a band worked. He didn't know the difference between a bass and a guitar, other than a bass had four really thick strings on it. He swore he didn't know how to sing. When they told him his voice was flat, he'd sing trying to imagine vocal mountains. To operate under that degree of ignorance and still come up with a record as compelling as *Murmur* is quite miraculous. That's why I love to do *Stop Breathing*. I have no idea how to run a fully functioning magazine—but I still publish one. The fact that I can do this without any realistic skills and their will still be an audience for it, is truly rewarding. Ignorance is bliss, I suppose, but another great cliché is that good art is made without boundaries.

10. Are you doing your zine for free records?

Absolutely. In fact, I'd like it to be known that the only reason that *Stop Breathing* is published is for the free designer drugs and all the invites I get to pool parties at the Cash Money Records compound.

11. What's the best and worst interview you've ever done?

Hands down, the worst interview I have ever done was for a *Versus* piece that never ran. For all I knew, they may have been cardboard replicas of Richard and Fontaine. Now, the best and worst interview I have ever done was this past fall with Chan Marshall of Cat Power. The circumstances were disastrous, but man was it interesting. She's an incredible enigma and quite charming even—too bad she can't hold together a quote.

12. Quote your favorite thing ever said in the pages of your zine.

"It's not even a word!" —J. Robbins on the level of self-parody "emo" has reached.

13. Do you write everything yourself? If so, why?

Because I'm a neurotic control freak, I indeed write everything myself. But I hardly do everything myself. There's a lot of great photographers—Angel Mendoza, Chrissy Piper, Tim Owen—that contribute stuff. Jason Gnewikow designs each issue's cover. Josh Hooten (who I still haven't met) constructs the interior pages. Kevin Wiese copyedits it and probably deserves a medal for his generous displays of patience. All of them deserve as much credit for *Stop Breathing* as I do.

14. How is your zine produced?

Usually on a gargantuan web press by people in the Midwest, who have no ability to grasp the concept of ink control.

15. Handwritten vs. Typewriter vs. Computer?

Sorry, I'm not much of a boxing fan.

16. What other zines inspire you?

Obviously *Punk Planet*—you'd be hard pressed to find another 'zine as committed to longevity and integrity. I also find it inspiring how Ron and Dave at *Muddle* would like to take their 'zine to a plateau that most 'zines find taboo—it makes me want to do the same. I love a ton of the newer 'zines like *Held Like Sound* and *Skyscraper* as well as *The Big Takeover* and *No Depression* for fanzines edited by middle-aged men. But hardly any fanzine inspires me to do *Stop Breathing*. I'm usually inspired by people who are divorced from the publication world—like my mother and my girlfriend.

17. What is "selling out"?

Something we will all be accused of once within our punk tenure.

18. If you could live off your zine, would you?

The truth is, I probably wouldn't live off of *Stop Breathing*. Unfortunately, I love doing this 'zine so much, that if it became my day job, I would take it for granted. And, truth be told, I couldn't live like that.

19. If you had a chance to interview someone who you would most likely never have a chance to talk to, who would it be?

Probably Nick Drake or Kurt Cobain. Yeah, sue me for using the safe answers, but it would really be embarrassing if I looked back at this issue and had to read something like, "Man, if I could have only spoken to Dahlia Seed."

20. Describe your dream interview (who, where, what setting).

It's funny, I always dreamed of interviewing Michael Stipe. Ever since I was young I've admired the man. But, this past Winter, Stipe—an admitted fan of *Stop Breathing*—agreed to grace the forthcoming issue's cover. So, I'd guess I'd have to revise this one. Hmm. I know! I'd interview Stipe again, but this time from New York City, since I really want to live there. We'd chat for hours in the kitchen of my Manhattan loft where my rent is only \$400 a month. This was the "dream" question, right?

Stop Breathing Postal Box 5461 Berkeley, CA 94705.



Elizabeth Elmore is known to come on strong. Having spent the last four years as the frontwoman of the Champaign/Chicago band Sarge, she is a powerhouse both onstage and off. Lyrically, she moves deftly from the plaintive to the perplexing. But offstage, she can hit as hard as a sledgehammer. With recently broken up, Elmore has embarked on a solo career—as well as a business career. Elmore is currently in law school at Northwestern. I spoke to Elizabeth Elmore two weeks after the band's demise.

Interview by Katy Otto

Why is the punk community important to you?

I came from a very small Midwestern farm town and had pretty much never heard punk rock until I went to my first all-ages show when I was 15 or 16. It was weird—for the first time in my life, everything just clicked and felt right. I never wanted to leave. ¶ Community-wise, I've seen why punk can be both so great and so awful. A lot of us grew up with Ian Mackaye as a role model and saw punk rock as a community—almost more than as music. I really loved that idea and thought my friends did too. It took me a while to realize that a lot of times my friends were just regurgitating the rhetoric without understanding the point. In my circle of friends, there wasn't a lot of community involvement outside of their own little microcosm and there was a lot of infighting within that. It wasn't until I got on the road and met people like Adam from Young Pioneers, who runs Food Not Bombs in Richmond, and other people like him that I realized there really were people out there doing impressive things. When I think of all the amazing kids working in this

big crazy network across the country, it blows me away. If I need a booking number for a town, there are 20 people I can go to at anytime. I've got friends I tag-team book with, switching numbers back and forth. I try to help kids out as much as possible when they're learning to book tours. We stay on people's floors and they stay on mine when they're here. It's the best example of "what goes around comes around" in the good sense!

A boy who stayed at my house while on tour with his band once told me that I reminded him of you because we were both "assertive women putting a lot of work into our bands." I'm wondering how that role played itself out for you.

Kim Coletta [DeSoto records, Jawbox] is the best role model for that—talk about a fantastic, intelligent, talented woman who worked really hard for her band and will always make time to offer advice or let you benefit from her experience. There's also Caithlin in Rainer Maria and Araby from Jejune—Caithlin always strikes me as really wise and Araby's a badass. But me? Sometimes I feel like some alpha-female. Does it ever occur to you to do things differently than you do? You're just being who you are, right? You're in a band, you love it to death, so you bust your ass. I do the same and I suffer for it in people's eyes sometimes. I can't figure out if it's because I'm too assertive or because I'm a woman and therefore under more scrutiny. A lot of guys in bands are lazy motherfuckers. [laughs] Maybe they're more threatened by it. I just get my shit done. If we had a tour to book, I worked my ass off. And you know, I'm easy to book shows with. We were good kids, we showed up on

time, we were nice. I have a great relationship with almost everyone we worked with in the country. I don't think of girls like us as particularly assertive—I think of us as normal and all the other girls as weird.

I know there have been times that you have shied away from “women in rock”-type billings, yet you serve as a role model for women musicians. Could you address some of the complexities that have arisen in your life around gender in the punk community?

I don't think I ever encountered the blatant sexism some women in music legitimately suffer. I supported the riot girl movement, but it always felt like an oversimplification to me. I was raised as a feminist. I already understood the way women were misrepresented in the media and discriminated against in different arenas. Punk rock wasn't any great feminist revelation for me. The problems I experienced always seemed a lot subtler than the problems that movement addressed. Actually, men that I met solely through music—bands we met on the road, bands we toured and bonded with, like the Dismemberment Plan, Compound Red, and Jimmy Eat World, always treated me great. They liked our band, took us for what we were and treated us like musicians and peers. They were like brothers, teasing me like crazy. ¶ The men I had problems with were the guys I was close to whose bands I had been very supportive of and when Sarge started, those guys were really great but then I realized it was because of the novelty factor. There were two girls in the band and we didn't suck completely—they were surprised. Once we got a little more atten-

tion, there was competitiveness and it sucked. I was really devastated at the time because I loved their bands so much. It's a really, really ugly side of people. They stop being driven and working hard for the love of the work, which is how I was. Instead, they became really ambitious and only cared about where the hard work was getting them. We got some crazy mainstream press and the attitude from a lot of guys was, “People wouldn't care as much if they weren't girls.” My response was, “Well, duh, do you think I'm stupid and don't know that?” I couldn't believe they thought I might be in my own little vapid vacuum of a world, assuming it had nothing to do with the fact we were girls. Of course it did. There aren't that many female musicians and it makes it easier to get attention, but harder to get respect. When I moved to Chicago, some guys were the same way. They wanted to know what I had *done* to get the press, like I had some master world domination scheme. I just kept saying “I don't know, we got lucky. We're just doing the best we can.” It's a mean position for guys to put you in, to make you apologize for the good things that have happened. ¶ A friend of mine just told me that before he knew me, he heard the only way I got good shows for Sarge was by giving blowjobs to booking agents! People are fucking insane. God forbid a critic or booking agent might just honestly like us. ¶ But a lot of times girls are worse to other girls than the guys are. Women can be vicious! I had a girl take after me pretty bad this summer in Chicago. It makes me gunshy about being friendly to other women my age. It's a little easier with

younger girls who look up to you and older women who are usually wiser. I always feel caught in the middle socially. The guys are always talking about gear and touring—what I'm interested in. And with the exception of a few great ladies, it seems the girls are usually talking about which guy in which band is cute. I've never been good at playing the “girlfriend of the rocker” and I made a conscious decision that I wasn't content being someone's satellite. I don't like to see other girls settle for that, but I think a lot of times they're so used to it they don't notice. ¶ As for Sarge's deep-seated aversion to “women in rock” shows: First, it's insulting to the guys in my band, like somehow they're less a part of the band. Once we were asked to play a “women's music” show and I yelled “we're not women's music, we're not anyone's music! We're a band, period.” Somehow, because I'm a girl, I'm not allowed to just go out there and do my job. It's not the music that matters, it's my gender. It's so frustrating on tour to see fliers that say “Such-and-such band, midwestern emo screamy pop,” and then “Sarge: girl rock.” Why doesn't it just say “girls” for god's sake? Apparently, it's the only thing that matters. ¶ It's a touchy topic, but I think it undermines people's respect for women as musicians when women always politicize the fact they are playing music at all. Playing guitar to challenge the patriarchy seems like a misplaced endeavor to me. There are probably more effective ways to go about that, don't you think? We make far greater strides by learning to be good musicians and then going out there and standing our ground. I'm a feminist. How I live my life, where I devote my time, how I interact with other women—all those things are political. But the fact that I play guitar is not a political statement, it's just who I am. I never liked the Riot Grrrl 101 theory that all girls should start bands. It has to come from your gut—you can't help playing music, you want it so bad you're dying. I've heard so many people say “I love girl bands.” That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard. It's no different from hating a band because there's a girl in it.

I THINK IT UNDERMINES PEOPLE'S RESPECT FOR WOMEN AS MUSICIANS WHEN WOMEN ALWAYS POLITICIZE THE FACT THEY ARE PLAYING MUSIC AT ALL. PLAYING GUITAR TO CHALLENGE THE PATRIARCHY SEEMS LIKE A MISPLACED ENDEAVOR TO ME.

I think so too. It was something we discussed in my Feminist Art Perspectives class, this idea of a loaded or marked term—"woman musician" or "woman artist." There are so many assumptions that those words incite, and it is separating those individuals from a larger category. Georgia O'Keeffe, for example, was always adamantly against being marked as a "woman artist" because she felt it would detract from the critique she got of her work.

Exactly. Affirmative action in music, at least in terms of women, really freaks me out. When the hell did "girl band" become a genre of music? How insulting is that? Are we really that homogenous? They put you on a bill and every band has a girl in it. It's girl ghettoization. What are the chances of that happening naturally? Then, after the show, some guy always says "Dude, you kicked ass! You're a great guitar player." All I can think is "you know what? I'm clearly not a great guitar player. I'm okay, I'm competent." What's implied in his statement is, "You're a great guitar player—for a girl." You're held to a lower standard because there aren't a ton of lady rockers and there's an obvious dearth of technically great ones. I know everyone starts screaming out exceptions when I say that. There are obviously the few shining lights, but most women rock musicians don't technically measure up to their male counterparts. Being able to shout out exceptions doesn't exactly make me feel better. And no, technical mastery is not the only important thing and I understand women on average start playing later in life as a product of their socialization. But saying we're great musicians when we're not implies women aren't as capable or talented in the first place so we have to pat them on the back for everything they've managed, poor things. I worry about encouraging young girls to go out and play shows before they're ready. On one hand their balls are really impressive. But are we teaching them they don't have to sit in a room and practice because they're girls and can get by with doing less? It's a self-perpetuating vicious cycle. It's condescending and marginalizing. We don't need to be coddled. I'd rather be held to the same standard, even if I fail.

From playing in a co-ed situation, do you believe there are inherently different ways men and women approach songwriting and being in a band? How do you see it affecting band dynamics?

As far as songwriting, I just don't know. I have a very limited ability in the way I write songs—I can do what I can do, and unfortunately not a lot more. I don't understand enough about the way I write songs to be able to compare it to other people. As far as functioning in a band, I don't think we do it differently because we're women. I do think we're put in a no-win situation sometimes, less accepted as the ones in charge. When the manager at some club really really wants to do money with a guy in your band and he's sitting there like, "talk to her. I don't know what's going on." I always thought about the business side of the band in terms of the punk ethic and trying to remember what that is supposed to be about—not about how I approach it differently as a woman. But it's easy to get a chip on your shoulder sometimes, dealing with an idiot sound guy or the cocks that work at music stores. I'm puzzled by the question the more I think about it. Do you think you do?

The reason I asked is that I had a really interesting conversation with Chad Clark from Smart Went Crazy where he said he never wants to be in a band that is strictly one gender because he thinks that there are so many attributes that are brought by both men and women. He said he thinks, as a general rule but not an all-defining one, that women contribute more attention to smaller detail, with more of a focus around the beauty of all the little parts and less about getting to the big rock-out end.

It's the stereotype of men being goal-oriented and women being detail and process-oriented. But I swear to god, I always have the "masculine" personality traits. Every time there is discussion of stereotypical male and female behavior, I'm the exact opposite. Usually, I want to get to the rock-out ending and the guys will be like, "Give us time to work on this—you've been playing it in your room for two months." In terms of band dynamics, I don't think I could ever be in an all-girl band. They're mean! I'd be

scared they would gang up on me, 'cause girls can be so brutal when they want to. I dunno. Todd from Braid and I were talking the other night about the differences in how we felt about our bands breaking up. He's a lot more at peace with it than I am. He said he thought no matter what, four guys in a band were just gonna bond in a different way than a co-ed band could.

I know you are currently in law school at Northwestern. How do you see this fitting in with the rest of your life?

I wish I knew. I've always wanted to do child welfare law and my family is a foster family, so I have a lot of personal experience. I took two and a half years off after undergrad to release another CD and tour but after last year in Chicago, I was stagnating. I spent all day booking tours and then drank all night—I was so one-dimensional. My entire life was music and touring and people like that are boring! I never wanted to be that type of person. Law school is great in some ways—my classmates are so rad, super smart and funny. It's intellectually challenging, more from the sheer bulk of material to be absorbed than the conceptual difficulty of the classes. It was really difficult managing the band and school last semester. One day I left school, flew to NYC for a show, and flew back in time for a class at 8:30 the next morning. We did a week tour with Discount and drove home after every show so I could go to class the next morning. The band bought a cell phone so I could take care of Sarge stuff between classes. I spent four months under so much pressure, acting like a fucking corporate maniac, on my cell phone trying to negotiate licensing agreements in the 10 minutes before my next class. My grades suffered, especially since the band broke up right before finals and that fucked me up. I still want to be a lawyer, just not right now. All I want right now is to be on the road. It killed me this fall—every guy I knew was on tour. I've been in Sarge since I was 19. I don't really know how to start over. The band was supposed to be a bump on the road to law school, but now law school is the bump on the road to music. ©

At the Drive In



I saw *Another State of Mind* on television. I think my parents saw it with me too, and they said, "We don't want you to go to those kind of shows."

At The Drive In has won ears around the globe with their personal intimacy and the breathtaking live performances that they embody. Currently one of the hottest "buzz" bands around, the members of At the Drive In haven't let it get to them.

Like a gaggle of adolescents Cedric, Jim, Omar, Pall and Tony all laugh with each other, calling each other slang nick names that seem to date back to infancy. These five unshaven young men are currently on their fourth national tour this year, and the miles of road they have seen thus far are what has shaped them into solid bandmates—and into each other's best friends.

I spoke with vocalist Cedric Bixler in December of 1999. I got a chance to learn what his eyes have seen and where he and his friends are going.

Interview by **Bryan Sheffield**

Photos by **Paul Drake**



You've had a few friends die—you documented their life in the song "Napoleon Solo"—how has that experience changed you?

That song was about two of our friends—two girls named Sarah Reiser and Laura Beard. I used to play drums in a band with them. As a group, we always used to support what bands they were in because not a lot of women were playing music in El Paso at the time. When they first started playing they were 15 years old—where we're from, nobody does that, so it was a big deal. The band I had with them split up, and I had more things to do with At The Drive In. We were in Austin on tour at the same time that they were. They left to go back home and we went to New Orleans to play. We were right about to play our first song, saying, "Hi everybody, we're At The Drive In," and we get a call. They were like "We have an emergency phone call for At The Drive In." I went picked up the phone and Jim tells me that Sarah and Laura got in a really bad car accident. It was three girls driving at the time, and the one girl at the wheel had fallen asleep—she was OK, but Sarah and Laura didn't make it. They died at the age of 17. It just kinda crushed... just kinda fucked up the rest of the tour. I didn't go home right away either, because the way I see it is they would have wanted us to go on, they would have wanted to tour with their music. ¶ We ended up putting out a seven inch of the bands they were in, including the one I was in with them. It's still probably available through Bottleneck Distribution in California, and you can get it through Headquarter Records. Most of the money goes to the Battered Women's Shelter. The song "Napoleon Solo" is just about celebrating their lives and what they did. In our hometown, it was a big deal to do the things they did. A lot of people would just dis on them or like them 'cause they were girls and just check out their bodies and stupid shit like that. They opened up a lot of minds and now there are some bands in El Paso with girls playing in them. It's a lot cooler now. I think they definitely paved the way for them, and we celebrate their lives with that song.

It seems that there is a big sense of community in El Paso.

Yeah, there is. It goes off and on—a lot of people move on. We have a place here

called Headquarters—it used to be an arcade, but the arcade just moved to this big place downtown. Headquarters is kinda like Gilman Street in Berkeley—it's just this really big community place.

What was it like growing up there?

It was kinda weird. There are a lot of very strange, close-minded people, but we are a big city. We're bigger than Albuquerque, we're bigger than Austin, but we have a small town mentality. When I first started going to shows, I saw *Another State of Mind* on television. I think my parents saw it with me too, and they said, "We don't want you to go to those kind of shows." But I started going to shows anyway and it was fun—it was this big community. Growing up here, it was one of the only things that I looked forward to doing. I wasn't too into going to Mexico, which is only like 15 minutes away from my house, or just drinking, 'cause we would always just get picked on and get into fights. Growing up here is kinda weird. It's rednecks, but it's *Mexican* rednecks, a lot of the time. They give us shit, but as long as we stick together, I think that it's okay. Slowly but surely people are starting to open their minds.

How has El Paso affected your music?

There were times when it was snowing a lot here, if you can believe that, and we'd just lock ourselves in this one apartment we were all living in at the time and just feed off what we were doing while being secluded from everything, and everybody. There are a lot of things going on here that affect the way that you think. ¶ There is a lot of gang culture here. There are age-old gangs in different parts of the city. There are always gangs, whether it's punk rock gangs or Cholo gangs with low riders and all that kinda stuff. That keeps you on your toes sometimes. ¶ Then there was the whole train track killer thing—he was from Juadas Mexico [just over the border from El Paso] and that has an impact. When you go into Juadas there are these pink crosses on telephone poles that go all the way down the strip deep into the heart of Juadas and it signifies the amount of women that have died

within the past couple of years. That has had a big impact on the way we write music. I guess you might call that political or whatever, but it's kinda fucked up over there. ¶ I guess being so far away from everything keeps us less jaded than in some bigger cities where they have heard *this* kind of music before or they've heard *that* kind. Sometimes we don't hear a lot of it unless we go to the record store and spend tons of money on the latest shit that is coming out. When we hear bands that come in from out of town like the VSS or the 90 Day Men, it opens your eyes more. We have stuff like that going on here too, but we don't get a lot of the info from the big cities—unless you are into *Punk Planet* or *MRR*. But sometimes the kids aren't interested in that, they are interested in creating their own sounds *here*—that is really neat. ¶ The culture definitely affects us, the heat and the shit that goes on over the border. There's a high school right next to the border called Buoy and the Border Patrol are always hassling the kids there because they have dark skin. It pisses you off sometimes—whether you are Mexican or white or black. Things like that influence us to write music that is not necessarily of a political nature, but has some sort of message of "fight back."

What are the kids at shows like in El Paso? Is there a lot of cultural diversity?

Totally. El Paso is predominantly Mexican. There are a lot of Mexicans, and a lot of black kids too that are coming out now. And now there are a lot of kids coming from Juadas—I didn't know there was really a scene down there. We have been meeting kids from there that say they like us and want to set up a show—but the problem is getting our equipment over the border or else having to rely on the equipment that they have there. Especially now that we are doing more electronic stuff, it is going to be harder to play over there, but I really want to go. I am just so stoked to see kids from there. I'll go up to someone and ask them what time it is, and they don't speak English. Talking with them and hearing them tell about their first punk show over here in the States is mind blowing. I think it's awesome. ©

Larry Crane is a renaissance man. Perhaps that flowery syntax may seem overblown, but in the last five years, Crane has built a recording studio; managed that studio; recorded some great records that you have and haven't heard; started *Tape Op* "the magazine about creative recording;" and found the time to have a life and occasionally rock out. Oh yeah, he's also been compiling a book of the first ten issues of *Tape Op*. I recently got to chat with the man in a break from his hectic holiday schedule and after sorting out the genius of the Who and sonic merits of the current catalog reissues, we got down to business.

Interview by **Dave Gardner**

So when you started the magazine, were you already doing recording?

I started engineering full sessions near the end of '94. That was the period of time where I started recording other people's bands, but before that I had a four track for years and I did demos on it. When I was in Vomit Launch, I demoed a lot of our songs.

I remember seeing ads for the Vomit Launch records and thinking, "Damn that's a great name."

It was a terrible name.

But in a great way.

We were a funny band, and I would do four track demos of our songs when we were getting ready to do an album. ¶ But even

before that—I'd say '79 or '80—I was doing stuff by pirating away my dad's stereo gear and taking it up to my room. I had a really huge loft bedroom, so I had all this space to work on things. I bought a little Radio Shack mixer and I would run from tape to tape and add to it as I bounced it down. I was learning how to do overdubs and I even learned to do flanging, with two tapes of the same things running at the same time and just accidental stuff like that. I remember trying to do echo and making Fripp loops on these little Sony 3" reel to reel decks that my parents used to use. This is all when I was 18 years old and I was just getting into it. I realized that I could read about something and then I could figure out how to do it. Even given really minimal gear, I'd figure out a way to make that sound. I was really into weird sounds. At the time, I was really into early Pink Floyd and even Yes, but at the same time Wire and Gang of Four and punk rock stuff. ¶ Then in '85 Vomit Launch started and I was paying a lot of

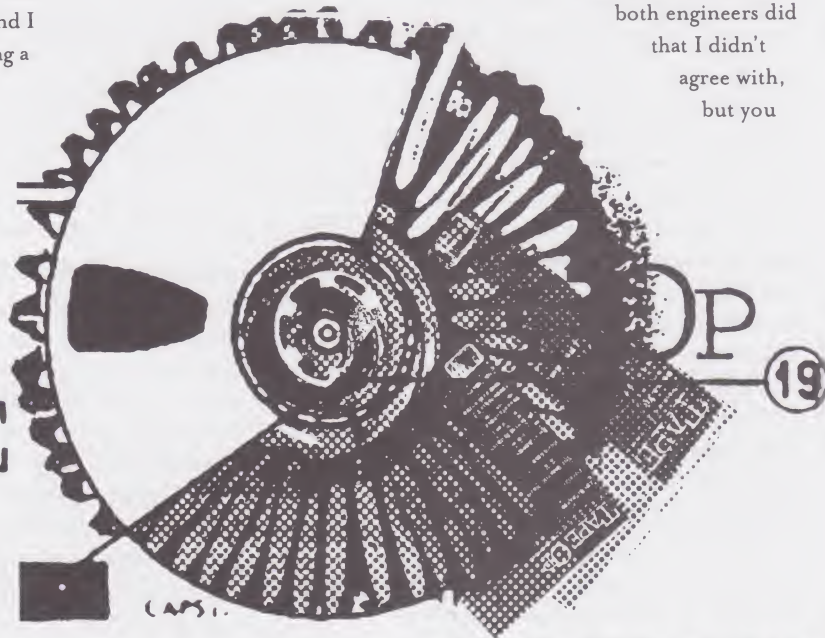
attention to what was going on in the studio. We worked with Greg Freeman from Pell Mell, who was just a wonderful person to work with. We worked with John Baccigaluppi, who is now the publisher of *Tape Op*. I was always watching those guys a lot. On the last few Vomit Launch records, the band wouldn't even be there for the mixing process. I would just come in with a list of what we wanted to do for overdubs and run everybody through that and then in most cases, John and I would mix. The last record especially was really my sonic vision. The band was a total democracy but when it came to recording that was my part. I learned a lot from John.

So you wound up making the jump from a four track to the studio based on positive recording experiences?

It was really easy for me to translate the ideas of working on a 4 track cassette to translate that to a 16 track studio—I could just see the possibilities.

There were things that both engineers did that I didn't agree with, but you

TAPE



PINCH ROLLER



LARRY

are always gonna get that if you have really strong sonic opinions. It was really cool for me to be able to say "This is how I'm going to mic a snare drum." If you listen to records that John and I have done, they are totally different sounding—which is funny because we are totally pals.

I think it's great to have friendships with engineers who you respect but do things totally differently than you.

Both John and Greg taught me a lot of shit. They are both the sweetest people in the studio and I learned from them how to be really calm and how to guide a session.

I think that comes across in the magazine as well. There is a sense of trying to live your life in a way that you learn lessons and realize that there is an infinite amount of wisdom and the more that you are able to know the more possibilities there are.

Recording music is an art. Like other things I've done—like ceramics or making films—there are so many ways you can run with it and nothing is really right or wrong. You can film a building for 24 hours and that's a film, but you go and make a really intricate documentary on a part of somebody's life too. It's just depends on what people want to do with it. I'm annoyed with reading people say, "This is how you do this, this is how you do that." I'm reading this book on building a project studio and I'm ready to kill the guy who wrote it.

The preaching from on high is something I can't handle. I remember being struck by its absence the first time I picked up *Tape Op*. It was evident right from the beginning that you were approaching the whole thing from a cool angle. I mean, I'm sure we both flip through *Mix* every month and the only thing I really flip about is the classic tracks section, where they go back and carefully document the technical

side of the making of a famous record.

Yeah, those are usually pretty good. I am totally happy being the punk rock recording magazine. I'm totally happy being the underdog.

I think it's sorely needed especially with tremendous growth in people doing home recordings. The home recording movement is great, but people's expectations of what they can do sonically is at times a little out of touch. The beauty of the four track is that it forces you to commit to a creative vision and that can produce amazing stuff, but it's never going to sound like it was recorded at Sunset Sound.

The thing that I have always tried to get across is that if you put the time and energy into it, you can make anything sound interesting. You just can't make *Sgt Pepper's* on a Tascam PortaStudio, which those old ads basically would say you could.

Oh man, if I have one more person say, "Wasn't *Sgt. Pepper's* done on a four track?" I don't know what I'll do. Whaddya say? "No actually it was three 4 tracks and they were 1 inch tapes."

Which were perfectly maintained by a staff of guys in white coats who lived in the basement of Abbey Road. Comparing any recording to anything done at Abbey Road is frightening because that has always been a state of the art, highly maintained place.

Those records sound incredible; it's amazing how you can listen to oldies radio and that stuff comes on and you just think, "Holy shit."

At that point, anyone running a tape deck was a certified professional. You didn't get to the position of engineering a Beatles record because you'd done a kick ass four track recording in your basement. You'd been there for years and you were a little stubborn

but you made sure everything sounded good. ¶ I'm gonna go on a little tangent here: One of the things that people are constantly going off on is "How many tracks?" You know

what? Tracks don't matter, it's what you put on the tracks that matters. If you have a bunch of great mics going through a great mixer and you do it right and put it all down on one track it is going to sound great. That was what was going on with older records. There were only three tracks on a lot of that old Tom Dowd stuff. Great players, good gear and good rooms is way more important than how many tracks you have.

It's so easy to get caught up in the gear thing, and it is a fundamental part of what we do, but more important than that is technique and your relationship with the people you are recording. I think it's what you said earlier about being relaxed, showing people respect and facilitating instead of taking the angry high school coach approach.

Yeah. I've lucked out and never had to deal with that. I've only had the lame engineer who got real fucked up and lost tracks. That's something I'd like to see *Tape Op* help eliminate: The drunk engineer.

Yeah, there's a whole mythology about getting fucked up in the studio. People will throw out Lee Perry, but...

Lee Perry made the records sound the way he did because he was a super genius, not because he was baked. Your hearing changes with your perception—your high end dips down the more alcohol you drink.

It's funny I got recommendations from a band after I politely declined to snort speed with them. They told folks that I was really professional because the guy they had recorded with before me had hogged all their speed and then been too cranked to really work well. If that's all I have to do to be professional...

I think it's funny the things that people think make you great. I feel that I'm not an amazing engineer. I've worked with engineers who get sounds where I think, "How the fuck did you make that snare to sound so good." I feel like I'm not an extraordinary engineer but people have faith in me. People know I'm reliable and can come in and hopefully they have the burden of wondering "What is this gonna sound like?" lifted a little bit. They know it will turn out well and there might be somebody else who could do it a little better, but they know it is going to work out with me. I try to keep the



recording process out of the way of getting the music done. I don't freak out. I like people, I like working with people and we have a good time. It's fun.

Then why start a magazine?

There was nothing to read! There was some stuff in the recording magazines and a few good books about recording, but I would think about the records I was really enjoying and the producers I was really enjoying and there was nothing about them anywhere! When we started, the first issue had Greg Freeman and East River Pipe and I interviewed Barbara Manning and Mark from Teen Beat records, and Unrest. There was just a wide open area that wasn't being covered. I figured people who were fans of the music would be interested and not just recording geeks.

When was this?

In '96.

So 15 issues later, can you see if there was one thing in particular that just pushed you into doing it?

People were really supportive. I'd tell 'em the idea for the magazine and they'd really get behind me on it. Rebecca Gates from the Spinanes was really supportive and said "you should do it." I had been writing for magazines and had done a horrible fanzine in '86. I thought instead of writing these lame ass record reviews, I could write about stuff that I cared about. ¶ One of things about *Tape Op* is that in general it's a really positive magazine. We don't slam people in record reviews and I try to make sure that it doesn't become just a negative forum for people to slam other people in.

I want to ask you about the format switch. What happened? You guys started out as photocopied, folded 8.5" x 11" zine and now it's a pretty slick, full-sized, bound magazine.

The first five issues were xeroxed and it was becoming a little bit too much work. My friends were becoming a little tired of me calling up and saying, "Hey free beer, come over and fold and staple." I was sick of it too and it was really hard to keep up with orders. I took the zine to a

I feel like I'm not an extraordinary engineer, but people have faith in me

printer and did three issues at digest size, because I thought a smaller size would save money. Then it turned out it was cheaper to do it 8.5" x 11", so I found a cheap printer and we did two issues in the larger format. Then I started talking to John Baccigaluppi who was doing *Heckler* magazine along with Sonny and Patty West, under the name Substance Media. At first when they threw out the idea of publishing *Tape Op*, I thought, "Nah, I'm not selling out." [laughs] Then they were up here for a couple days because their band was playing a show and they bought me a Cajun dinner and we drank a lot of Schlitz and they kept saying, "Come on, man, come on." We hashed it out. I did it because it was just way too much of a load at that point. I was dealing with advertising, filling orders, keeping track of subscriptions, organizing the bulk mail... The amount of work was outrageous and I just didn't have the time to do advertising—I'm really grateful to the people who gave me ads because I didn't even have time to call 'em back! John, Sonny and Patty asked me what I wanted to do. Did I want to do layout? No. I just wanted to hand them files and say here's the magazine, here are the photos to scan. That's where we're at now. It's been four issues now and it's a whole different world.

So things are good with that relationship?

Oh yeah. It still doesn't make much money, but John has done a great job selling ads and it's doing well enough.

That has got to be nice and gives you a little breathing room

What it has done is free me up to write a lot more. A year ago, I was writing maybe one article per issue. Now I've got 15 articles in the can and ready to go. At first I was really scared that I was gonna get really angry letters saying, "What are these glossy ads in here, what is all this blah, blah,

blah." My retort to that criticism was there are more articles per issue and subscriptions are free. I never really had to back it up, but I felt like I had pretty good ammunition.

I think there's an opportunity there for you guys.

I mean the other American recording magazines are just kind of an old boys network—everyone slapping themselves on the back and justifying why and how the industry exists. While you and I are in probably one of the smallest markets in the world wanting to record indie rock albums. It's not a very lucrative market because you are getting asked to do something for \$500-\$3000 and it's not a big moneymaking thing. But it's fun because you know in the end, as far as art, what we're doing is really interesting

There is an editorial you wrote in issue 14 where you said that some of the best stuff you do no one will ever hear. But I think that care, affection and acknowledgement will translate to the records that people do hear. I flipped out when I heard that new Quasi record you did. The emotional content of that record is fully captured in that recording.

That's Sam, he's a genius.

But you're facilitating them doing it.

Well that's my job, isn't it? With a band like Quasi, I think you can do a good record on anything because the songs are so damn good and they're really good players. Also, that album is a really good example of how being really good friends can help a recording. It's a really strange thing when we work together in the studio. For instance, Janet will say "Can you turn up my tom?" and my hand will already be on the fader. We were hearing that record in our heads the same way. ¶ I'm lucky because I'm at the point now where I am doing stuff I really want to do. I'm not complaining about anything right now. ©

20 QUESTIONS WITH THE BAND TRISTEZA

1. When did your band form?

Summer of 1997.

2. When will it break up?

No comment.

3. What have you released so far?

First a 7" on Caffeine vs. Nicotine, then a full length CD/LP with Makoto Recordings, then a 4 song CD EP with Insound for their tour support series, and then a 7" with Rocket Racer Recs.

4. Why do you play the music that you play?

We play it because we enjoy it and it is what we write.

5. What is the weirdest thing that has ever happened at a show?

In San Francisco, at the Purple Onion, the owner of the club grabbed the microphone when we were playing and he started to sing with us. It was pretty funny, because he used echo and space effects with his voice

6. What is the best show you've ever played?

It's hard to say—we've played a lot of good shows. Our better ones were in Philly and Memphis.

7. State your purpose.

To effect ourselves and people throughout the world positively through music.

8. What were the runner up names for the band?

There were none.

9. How do you describe yourself to relatives who have no idea what you play?

Melodic instrumental modern rock.

10. How do you describe yourself to kids in the scene who haven't heard you?

Melodic instrumental modern rock.

11. What does the band fight about the most?

Driving shifts.

12. What is the antithesis of your band?

To communicate with music.

13. Outside of music and bands, what influences you?

Travel, art, love, family, reading, and productive people that work hard—such as our publicist, Dave Brown.

14. What is selling out?

Playing music that you wouldn't listen to for the basis of money, or making decision purely based on money.

15. If you could make a living off your band, would you?

Yes.

16. Where do you practice?

We practice in our drummer's bedroom in Golden Hill—2415 E street.

17. If you could play on a four-band bill, with any bands that have ever existed, who would you play with and what order would they play?

Us, Slowdive, Brian Eno, Pink Floyd.

18. What goals do you have as a band?

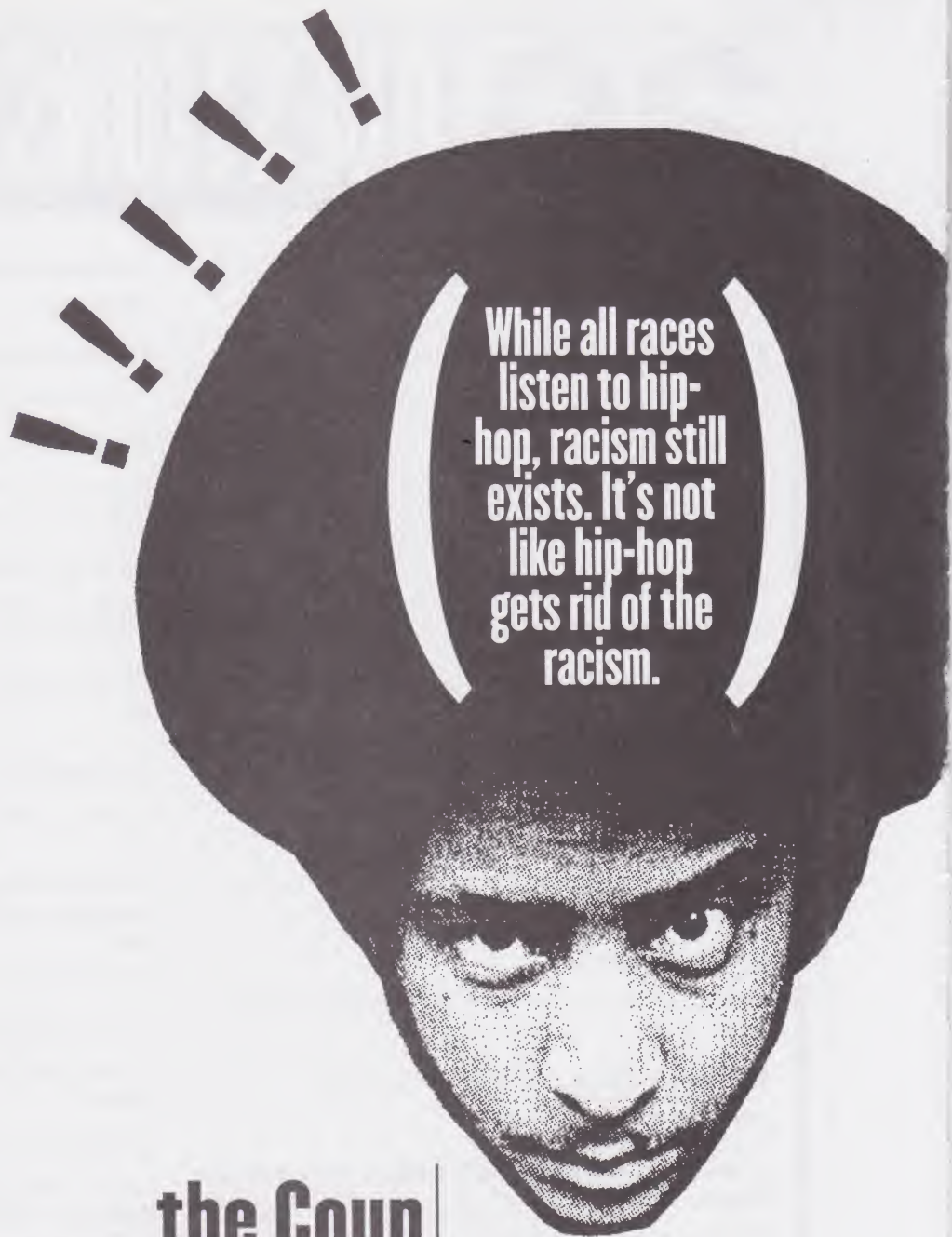
To express ourselves through music and to travel the world while supporting ourselves.

19. What makes for a good show?

A good audience, good treatment by venue people and by other groups, and descent sound in a nice environment—and us playing well.

20. If you were to cover a song (that you don't already) what would it be?

A Police or Brian Eno song.



the Coup

There are very few bands—hip-hop, punk rock or otherwise—which match the intelligence and artistry of Oakland's The Coup. Featuring singer Boots Reilly, and DJ Pam The Funkstress on turntables, the Coup released their third album, *Steal This Album*, on Oakland's Dogday label in late 1998. Appropriately named after Abbie Hoffman's legendary 1970s guerilla manual, *Steal This Book*, The Coup manage to fulfill many of the possibilities first laid out in political hip-hop with the rise of artists like Public Enemy, Boogie Down Productions,

Paris, and more recently, The Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy.

What distinguishes The Coup from their artistic predecessors is the level of political sophistication that they bring to their work. The Coup's songs take contemporary American life to task from the perspective of sensitive, unselfconscious Marxists, without any of the ridiculous hyperbole or bullshit revolutionary trimming. They're genuine radicals who've done their reading, spent their time in political organizations, worked the streets as organizers—and it shows. Over the

years that The Coup has been producing records (their first album, *Kill My Landlord*, came out in 1993), they've matured as a beautiful, hard hitting, P-Funk influenced band, capable of crafting intelligent lyrics and hard-ass beats, with amazing hooks and a hilarious sense of humor.

I got a chance to talk it up with Boots one fine afternoon before Christmas at a café in Berkeley. The following amazing conversation is what transpired.

Interview by **Joel Schalit**
Photograph by **Emilie Wilson**

When I read about The Coup in the press, people always seem to tag you as a "revolutionary" hip-hop band. Do you feel like that's an accurate description?

Well, our politics talk about revolution, but I have a hard time with that description because I've been in disciplined political organizations before. You can't really be a revolutionary unless you're in an organization because revolution is not something you can do by yourself. That's a major contradiction with the idea that we're a revolutionary band. You understand what I mean?

You're saying you can't be a legitimate political actor unless you belong to a party.

Right. Also, the thing that I think that observation about us tends to do is that it gives people the idea that I'm only talking about some pie in the sky idea. I am a revolutionary. I think that the capitalist system needs to be taken down. There needs to be a system in which the people decide where the resources go. A system that's ultra-democratic in the sense that you not only vote on who is going to lead the town, but you also vote on where the profits from the local factory are going to go. That's more democracy to me. ¶ But the question is whether it's going to happen any time soon. Right now? I don't think it's possible. The only way it'll ever happen is by people fighting for much more immediate things that might not be considered revolutionary. Like 100 people marching into the social services office and saying that they won't leave until they walk out with a \$100 more in food stamps—things like that. The stuff that I write about in my songs are more

like that—everyday life. That's why when people call us "the revolutionary rap group out of Oakland," it really doesn't define us that well. ¶ A lot of times, the people who define us as revolutionary also put other artists in categories where they don't fit, like 'gangsta rap.' If you listen closely, 99 percent of all rap musicians are saying "Things are fucked up. This is how you get out of this situation." And that's what we're talking about too. It just so happens that I might not agree with the way other artists may advise you to get out of a given situation.

Like in gangsta rap.

They're taught to believe that their problems are caused by "that nigga down the street," or "those bitches over there." But we're all taking about the same problem. It's just that our analyses are different. ¶ I think that a lot of times the people who lump us into the category of "revolutionary," conversely prevent other people from being perceived as being "revolutionary." Take Juvenile for example: He has that one song called "Coughed," which was one of the most socially conscious songs to have come out in years. Yet he got slotted in the "gangsta" rap category and called "ignorant" because he had a southern accent and more of the kinds of beats that black people would listen to.

Mainstream rock critics tend to create political communities amongst record buyers. Not that indie zines are immune to that—they can be even worse even. But mass produced rock magazines usually have more consistently conservative politics, and a far bigger audience, which means that they have a bigger impact on forming consumer opinions than the so-called "good guys" do.

There's a big area of hip-hop criticism that doesn't acknowledge this. While all races listen to hip-hop, racism still exists. It's not like hip-hop gets rid of the racism. Right now it seems to me that a lot of our crowd, since they get attracted to us because of our politics, are pretty much progressive. But if you go to some of the hip-hop sites on the Internet, they break down the music and say that everything that doesn't have a blues aesthetic is *real* hip-hop. Anything that does have it is that "thug shit," "ignorant," or things like that. I haven't studied cultural anthropology, but I know there is a difference. Among the genres that do have a blues aesthetic and have those certain notes that black people in America are thought to have traditionally listened to, hip-hop is not considered artistically advanced. What ends up happening is that there's "pure" hip-hop like Mos Def and De La Soul—I listen to all those artists and I was very much influenced by the whole East Coast aesthetic, like De La Soul—and then you have the other ones, where the background music is more blues oriented. Even if the music is original, it gets dismissed. ¶ What I also see dividing hip-hop is how lyrics get treated by critics, especially in magazines like *The Source* and *Rap Pages*. If the music has a blues structure, it leads critics to conclude that the lyrics are all about what they perceive as "gangsta" issues. For example, when our first record came out, we had this song called "Not Yet Free," and *The Source* and *Rap Pages* called us a gangsta rap band.

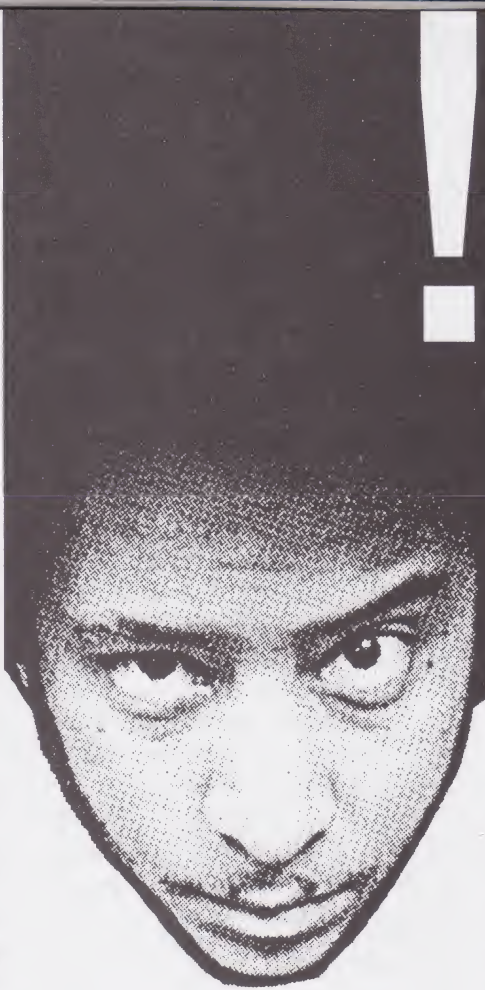
That's absolutely ridiculous! That also points to the intellectual limitations of such maga-

zines. Their writers and their editors have their genre categories, and they have to stick to them.

They said, "Yeah, this is more gangsta rap." I didn't care about it really because what it ended up doing was bringing a whole new crowd of people into our audience who otherwise might never have listened to us. But there's definitely some elitism going on which forces magazines and critics to miss a lot of what is going on. When Ice Cube's first album, *Amerikkka's Most Wanted*, came out, it got called "gangsta" even though it had songs that were revolutionary. That created a divide that we continue to live with in rap music today. That divide is sometimes classified as "East Coast/West Coast," but it doesn't really even go along those lines. ¶ Obviously anything considered gangsta is going to be consumed by a larger audience. If it's going to sell a million copies, it has to be bought by kids in middle America—that's where the market is and that's what's controlling how people make their music. But there are some musicians that stick a little bit more to the tradition of black music. I'm not saying that we have to stick to that because I like to do things that are more experimental too. The problem is that there's a lot of racism inherent in what type of rap music gets consumed and written about. The critics are only talking about the songs that are ignorant, have no brains, the more animalistic material. Or they cover the stuff that is just out there—the stuff that is so abstract that the lyricist could mean anything. That's what's considered to be more "advanced," the more it doesn't make sense. Even though they're sticking to the same lyrical formulas—"I do this like that, I do this like that, I do...what-ever—they do so because the songs don't relate to real life. There's a class difference in why they're doing that.

Fantasy helps divert one's attention from reality. And it also betrays an ability to disregard every day considerations.

I grew up in a lower middle class family. School was something that was taught to me as being important, as was



reading. But in the areas I grew up in, the income levels were very different, so I appreciate all the different kinds of rap aesthetics. But it's a middle class thing to want to make hip-hop more escapist. That's the purist position. That's why I have had people come up to me and say that what I'm doing is not *real* hip-hop because I'm just using hip-hop for my own political purposes. I'm told that what I do is not *real* hip-hop because I'm trying to get across a message, when *real* hip-hop is really all about parties. There's the difference: You can't party and have a message. These are the people who are the tastemakers of hip-hop. They like to help determine what certain crowds listen to, and that has a ripple effect on how people make new music.

Give me some examples.

Right now, what's called "underground" hip-hop is not even really underground. It follows along the same elitist lines that

art has always followed for years and years: Don't let it have anything to do with reality and don't let it get across any message. That's the purest form of art.

So what you're saying is that rock criticism serves a political purpose: it helps to maintain the status quo by only covering music that mystifies everyday life. I totally agree. But rather than attribute this to some kind of organized conspiracy that's intended to neutralize radical art, I tend to think that mainstream music criticism is all about pushing new product. You can't do anything else when you see music journalism as a kind of glorified, over-intellectualized branch of advertising.

Right. But more and more the people are saying, "No, this is the kind of art we want to get." I saw one article where this one rapper was asked why Southerners don't like his music. He said, "They ignorant down there. They just be backwards." The problem is that nobody knows who he's talking about, so it was considered OK. He wasn't going to say any such thing about the West Coast, because then nobody would buy his records. It's artists like that which we're being told we ought to want: Pure bullshit. ¶ There's so many artists that are out there that are *underground* in the sense that they sell tens of thousands of albums with no promotion, just on the street, and it wouldn't fit into that purist, East Coast notion of "underground," the street notion of underground. They don't get *called* underground. They don't get supported by these writers who say that they're trying to support independent labels. They don't get the kind of support they need because their art is an expression of what they're going through.

That sounds like you're describing The Coup. I'm curious what kind of community is supporting the band right now?

For The Coup to work, there has to be a big movement going on, which there isn't. But what I've done is reach out to a lot of people who have progressive politics—communists, socialists, anarchists, whatever. I'm a Communist myself. I think The Coup has been is theme music for those kinds of people.

Did the new album bring in any newer kinds of fans that hadn't already been radicalized?

We did a lot of promotion for this album on the Internet, because we didn't have anybody doing it for us. A lot of the people who bought this album were the hardcore Coup fans, and then we got brand new people who'd never bought a Coup album before. But many of the people who bought our first two records didn't buy the new one. Every time I go to another city, people come up to me asking when we're going to release a new record because they never heard about the new one. They're always surprised when I tell them that it's been out for a while already.

You were on a major before.

Right. The main difference between now and before is placement in stores and video play. Neither The Box nor Black Entertainment Television would play our new video because it was about prostitution. I named them some videos that they were currently playing that dealt with prostitution, and was told that those videos dealt with it "in a different way." What they meant was that the other one was essentially a party song: Some dude gives a girl a bunch of money to go into a room where there's another guy, and that's it.

Of course. The acceptable video is one that glorifies a man's right to his prostitutes. I think that "Me and Jesus the Pimp in a '79 Grenada Last Night" had something far different in mind.

I called them on that, and what they admitted was that our video was just too grim and depressing. I brought up all these other videos that could be classified as grim and depressing but didn't get anywhere. Basically, we're the only group that those stations banned for political reasons. ¶ They also banned our other video, "Taking Things," because we had this scene where people are running in to Rockefeller's mansion, taking out the furniture and giving it out on the street. The station issued statements saying that they would have run the video if the victim in it wasn't rich and wasn't white. We were going to

build a whole case built on their statements, but the guy who was the other witness aside from myself, he worked in video promotion, said that he'd never get a job in video again if he testified about what had happened. With the "Taking Things" video, our record company offered to delete all the images and just have a black screen with the words on it, like Prince's video, but the station responded that they would not air it because they were "concerned that the video would cause unrest in the streets."

It must be nice to see someone taking your work so seriously! [laughs]

Yeah! We were going to host a press conference but then our witness in the video-promotions department decided to deny that any of this had happened. Apparently his station told him that they'll never play any video that he worked on if he spilled the beans. I went around and asked a lot of artists for their support, but almost no one would make a statement on our behalf. The only one who did was Chuck D—I didn't even have to ask him. But everybody else we asked—big artists, small artists, all said no because they had videos coming out that they wanted to get played. ¶ BET was the only station that played the video, but once The Box took it off, they decided to follow suit.

They censored you.

But the question is, who is the *they* who censored me? Who is the *self* that's involved? The Box is owned by MTV, and the program director at BET had previously been the program director at MTV—it's now all one thing basically.

It's a homogeneous community of arts administrators.

Right. But getting back to *our* community, its necessary for organizers to have something like us to listen to in order to feel like they're doing the right thing. But that's not what I set out to do. I didn't get into it for reasons like that. I would rather just do stuff on a local level. It takes a lot of time to do albums. They have the system set up so that artists are this elite group—so that they're not with the rest of the people. It's really


difficult being an artist. You're practicing. You have to work very hard to save up a lot of money to put out your records or you have to tour all the time, living from hotel to hotel. You're not really living life with everyone else, so you really don't have an idea of what's going on. So your art starts eating away at itself. You begin to copy what you've already done, using experiences that you had years ago when you were a more normal person. I think that happens because people are taught that they have to be born with some kind of special gene in order to be artistic. Even though everyone could do art, they don't. Everyone is separated. ¶ I don't really see a big movement right now. I don't agree with creating a revolutionary culture right now. I think that it's more appropriate to make the culture *out there* revolutionary instead. I don't want to create a clique of people that is so revolutionary that they don't listen to the kinds of music that everybody else listens to. That's not revolutionary because then they're not talking to those people.

That kind of revolutionary cliqueishness tends to be a big problem for political punks too. They excuse themselves from talking to the so-called people by being so artistically and socially unique that no one understands them outside their own hipper-than-thou faux-vanguardist circles. Every political arts culture suffers from this illness.

That happens in rap music too. If you develop organizers out of that kind of community, they're going to be so isolated in their ways of talking and relating to people that nobody will want to do anything that they ask you to do. You can sense that they don't really want to talk to people either. ¶ If I'm not able to make my music do something different, I would rather just be a community organizer and make songs every now and then. But rap music is controlled by the market and the market says you can't just come out with a single every three or four months. But I want to put myself in that kind of position anyway. The songs I'd write would be more about what's going on, and that would help us deal with specific issues better. ©



Our whole culture is all about sex and violence.
You have to dare yourself to get in there.



More and more, Dennis Cooper is being acknowledged as one of the literary masters of our age. The author of poetry, short stories and a cycle of *Closer*, *Frisk*, *Try*, *Guide*, and the brand-new *Period*—he is a standard-bearer for writing which is both experimental and accessible, equally at home in the secret places of a disgruntled teen's room and a graduate-school seminar where people discuss the "postmodern sublime."

And to top it all off, his work features some of the most extreme depictions of sex and violence ever put to paper, like this passage from *Frisk*:

They kicked the corpse around for a while. That created a pretty hilarious fireworks display of blood, with him swinging like the clapper in an invisible bell. I wanted the Germans to cut off his head for some reason, so they severed the rope suspending him and turned the corpse on its stomach. They sawed through its neck—carving, hacking, abrading, etc. The head came free, which took a very long time. Then they kicked the headless torso around. We were all soaked with blood, not to mention a clear goo that came from some organ inside him.

The matter-of-factness of Cooper's language makes this sort of scene harder to take. But, paradoxically, it also has the power to make you laugh in the right context.

Someone read this passage to me on a train and I nearly died. The incongruity of the LA colloquial speech with the extremity of the actions being described, the exciting prospect that the people around us were eavesdropping, and the sheer pleasure of transgression made the book seem like comedy. Cooper's ability to generate such perverse reactions testifies to the edgy brilliance of his work. It always seems to be taking you to the verge, whether of tears or laughter. And yet it's deeply cerebral too—a colossal head trip, if you will.

Cooper is also that rare find, a "serious" writer who takes music seriously. It is, in fact, an integral part of his work. From his

early poems about punks and pop icons, to the Hüsker Dü and Slayer lyrics which frame *Try*, to the fictional death-metal band The Omen featured in his new novel *Period*, Cooper takes the marriage of rock and literature to a new level of complexity. He also works as a journalist, writing about music for the likes of *Spin* and *Art Forum*. But the interviews, features, and reviews he writes aren't just something he does on the side. They are incorporated into his fiction. In *Guide*, for example, Cooper includes a chapter called "The *Spin* Article" which constructs a sexual fantasy around a piece he wrote for *Spin* on homeless, HIV+ street kids. Some of Cooper's journalism was recently collected in *All Ears: Cultural Criticism, Essays, and Obituaries*. *Punk Planet* spoke with Cooper as he was gearing up for the release of *Period*.

Interview by Charlie Bertsch

You have a long history of involvement with punk, which is unusual for a writer of your stature. When did your first discover it?

I came to it at the university. I had this show on the college radio station and I got to listen to all sorts of music. Initially, I knew the New York stuff—Television, Patti Smith, the Ramones. And then I made a pilgrimage to England to see what was up. A friend and I went over there and hung out. Then I started the arts magazine *Little Caesar*. In LA, I was extremely involved in the scene. Punk was pretty crucial for me. It was a big influence on my writing and my whole way of looking at the world. The hippy thing was really gruesome to me. And I was a little too young for it. It just struck me as being way too into feelings. I just remember that I felt really pressured to, like, hug people and dance around naked. And I was not that kind of kid. I was just too fucked up. But I really connected with punk.

The aggression cancels out the beauty in punk, which makes it more beautiful in a way.



In reading the poetry that you wrote in your *Little Caesar* days, one of the things that comes through really strong is the reaction to "poetic language." It's like you're saying "I don't want to use that language. That language doesn't fit my world. So I'm going to use the language of everyday life as I live it." I can see parallels to punk, in the sense that punk was about trying to match up the musical idiom with what people were actually feeling as opposed to having to be all complex and baroque in order to impress other people.

But I was also reacting to Charles Bukowski. Because, growing up in LA, it was just "Bukowski, Bukowski, Bukowski" and I wasn't into that either. Because that seemed really slovenly and Beat to me. And I wasn't interested in the Beats at that point. You're right, of course, that what I was doing then was about stripping down language. But I also loved John Ashberry. And I liked Wire, whose lyrics were really abstract. So it wasn't against complexity, but against elitism and against academia—this fruity kind of high language thing that didn't interest me. And there was also the fact that I was gay but hated gay culture, especially gay literature for being so highfalutin and purple and everything. So my early work and *Little Caesar* combined a reaction against all that stuff. But I was totally interested in complexity, and to me punk music was very complex.

That's an interesting point. The things people focus on when they're trying to describe punk

to someone who doesn't understand it, or when they're trying to summarize what's special about it, are usually its directness, the fact that it's in your face, and the do-it-yourself aesthetic. That's not an inaccurate description, but it does tend to mask an underlying complexity in many cases. And that's also one of the things I see happening to your work a lot. When I talk to people who've read your work, I find that a lot of them appreciate its in-your-face value, but they don't necessarily see what lies underneath. They miss out on the fact that, although you're presenting this extreme content, you're also reflecting on what it means to present extreme content.

Yes, they do. [laughs] I mean definitely, absolutely! I've gotten sort of jaded because I'm so used to people going after me for that. But you know, if you're going to understand something really horrifying, you've got to give it its due. There's a huge history of people writing about the stuff that I've written about. But the tendency is to turn it into some sort of psychological portrait, like "The Mind of a Sicko," or to graft it onto thriller structures. You can't get to the bottom of that material, what the appeal of it is. But it seems to me that it's possible to portray it in such a way that you really get the charge from it at the same time you're deconstructing it. Because I have mixed feelings about it—I'm totally fascinated by it and think it's erotic and all that stuff, but I also think it's awful.

Let's say you run into someone at a club. He hasn't read any of your work yet. But he's looking forward to it, because he's totally into sex-and-death culture and has heard that you're really hardcore. How do you describe the extreme content in your work to somebody like that?

I think it's really important to be honest about it. That's a dumb way to put it, but it's true. I'm trying to reflect exactly what I think about it. I don't think there's any point in lying about that stuff if you want to write about it. I mean, it's very visceral. It's stupid to deny that it has power. Our whole culture is all about sex and violence.

You have to dare yourself to go in there. Strangely—or maybe not so strangely—a lot of my readers are really young. It's like I have a weird division between readers who are really young and readers who are academics. Everybody in the middle doesn't know what to do with me. Kids seem to get it because they relate to the whole thing about the inability to express feelings and about having feelings for people and hating yourself for it and hating them for it and then trying to connect with them.

One thing that really interests me in your work is that there's so much in it about music and images and you're able to catch it in writing. You're always dealing with that paradox—it's like trying to capture in words what can't be captured in words.

In the new book it's almost like I decided, "Well, fuck, I can't do what I want to do, so I'm going to make it disappear." It's like a magic trick or something. All the obsessions in my books are my own obsessions. Each book is right where I am, you know? When I wrote *Try*, I was obsessed with Husker Dü and Slayer, and those two bands indicated a really big split in me. When I wrote *Guide* I was trying to figure out what rave culture and electronic music were and I wanted to fuck the guy in Blur. Putting that stuff in the books is not only a way to keep myself honest, but also a way of maintaining sanity, because my work's so psychotic. So to connect it to Blur or Silverchair or whatever shows that this person is able to move through the culture or something.

I wanted to ask you about that connection. One interesting thing about your work, in contrast to that of most fiction writers who have focused on rock music, is that you construct this weird blurring of fact and fiction where you'll have Blur in a book but also the fictional band Smear. Why do you need both?

That example comes from *Guide*, which is about acid. I wanted there to be this constant play in the book between what was real and what wasn't real. So the non-fiction stuff, the digressions and all of that

seem real in contrast to the part that's obviously fiction and seems fake. But in fact they're both fake. As far as playing with the band names goes, that was partially a legal decision pushed on me by my publisher, but I worked it into the book too. It's like Blur's entering my imagination so they become simulacra. There are all these parallels in the book, such as the one between fairy tales and child pornography. And so I wanted to do the same thing with the band names. So there's the real Blur and the parallel Blur, the real Blur that was a voice on the radio and the alternate Blur that was available to be fucked with.

That idea of parallel words is also a big part of your new novel *Period*. Reading it, I got this sense of infinite regress, like when you have two mirrors facing each other.

It's important that everything in *Period* have its equal. By the end of the book, everything in the book cancels everything else out except for this kid who killed himself. The book was written for my friend who committed suicide. Being the conclusion of this cycle of five books, I really wanted the book to disappear in the end.

One of the things that really trips people out about your work is that you make yourself a character. The most obvious example is in *Frisk*, where we learn about "Dennis," who lived places that you had lived and writes the kind of prose you write, but who also seems like this horrible monster who kills for sport. For readers who don't know you, this can be really unsettling. And it certainly helps you to blur the distinction between fact and fiction. But there's nobody in *Period* who seems like you. The author figure Walker Crane clearly isn't a stand-in for Dennis Cooper. Why did you decide to distance yourself from *Period*?

I've done that Dennis thing so many times. I think I did it as far as I could do it in *Guide*. And, like I said before, I wanted everything in the book to cancel itself out. I wanted the author to disappear too. The beginning and end of *Period* read like a Gothic novel. It isn't my work. It's consciously this kind of odd, slight book. Also, almost everything I've written has been based in Los Angeles or New York or somewhere that's very recognizable. But *Period* is based completely in

this fictional idea of the South. I didn't want it to be me that was writing about that. I wanted it to be this guy Walker Crane. I wanted him to be a joke too.

Why did you decide to conclude your cycle of novels with this "period?"

I've always thought of these five novels as one work. I think they're fine separately, but I they do form a whole. I always knew that George Miles, who is the main character in the first novel *Closer*, was going to return in the last book, though I wasn't sure how it was going to end. But I found out that George killed himself right before I started working on *Period*. So that determined the shape of the ending.

So that was an unfortunate case of fact and fiction merging.

I wrote the books for him in a way. I lost track of him. So I wrote these books about him because he was this big influence on me. And I sort of figured he was out there reading them or something. It was very weird. Then I found out inadvertently that he had killed himself. And he killed himself before I even wrote *Closer*. That helped to determine the structure of *Period* too, the fact that this guy had been for dead a long time and was just this figment of my imagination. That's one of the reasons why *Period* is so odd, because I don't even remember who he is in anymore. So the George in the novel is just this endless replication over and over and over until there's nothing left anymore.

I wanted to talk to you about fandom. Throughout your work you deal a lot with fans. Musicians like to present themselves in a one-sided way. They don't really deal with the diversity of fan responses to their work. On the one hand, the way you depict fans reveals them in all their embarrassing idiosyncrasy. But on the other hand, by depicting the obsessiveness of fans in the way that you do, you show us a way of escaping from the mass culture that's forced upon us.

Right. I'm very interested in fandom because I'm such a huge fan dork myself! [laughs] A lot of it's just intuitive, you know? Because I am this massive fan. I'm just ridiculous about it. I mean, I interviewed Steve Malkmus of Pavement and

when he said he really liked my books, I lost my mind. It's ridiculous. This guy's younger than me, but it's so exciting—it's like a kind of religion. Also, I'm always dealing with sexual obsession, so one of the things I like about fandom is that it isn't really like sexual obsession. I just think everybody's so sexually obsessed, like myself, that it's nice to be a fan. Music is so beautiful. When you're a fan, it's not like a human relationship at all. And it's nice to be humbled by something so beautiful.

But, of course, one of the things that you do with the sexual relationships in your book is to reveal the fact that they are kind of inhuman. So there's this weird way in which, even though sexual obsession and fandom are opposites, they come around and meet somewhere like one of those Moebius strips.

And they're both pointedly ridiculous too.

You were talking about the beauty of music, which reminds me of something else I wanted to ask you. One of the connections between your work and punk aesthetics is the way in which they make beauty into a problem. There is beauty, but to get to it you have to pass through something that seems ugly to most people. In other words, beauty is masked.

That's something I really responded to in punk. The aggression cancels out the beauty in punk, which makes it more beautiful in a way. There's nothing more beautiful than some hardcore band. Watching them play is just the most beautiful thing in the world. Mosh pits are so beautiful, though I don't think most people see it that way. I don't know. I think about beauty in my work a lot. But beauty's so weird. I'm so enthralled by beauty, but I also have this incredible hatred of exploitation. So I'm really split on that stuff. Being gay, I particularly hate the way beauty is used in gay culture. I hate this Bruce Weber/Abercrombie & Fitch shit. It just drives me insane. And I hate the way gay men talk about boys. But, at the same time, I'm prone to being in awe of beautiful guys. I'm schizo about it, like I am about a lot of things. My work's very schizo in a way. ☺

Charlie Bertsch is a writer and teacher living in Vallejo, CA. You can reach him by e-mail at cbertsch@crl.com.



Grounded in the late '70s tradition of political punk embodied by bands like Crass, the members of the AK Press Collective have been publishing and distributing anarchist literature for over a decade. This political literacy work disseminates both classic and current anarchist literature, as well as other politically relevant fiction and non-fiction, and spoken word CDs.

The collective also hosts get-togethers in San Francisco where burgers and beer are free under the shade of big trees, and writers read from their work. From Martin Sprouse's *Sabotage in the American Workplace* to Christian Parenti's *Lockdown America*, the AK Collective has consistently disseminated the most engaging and relevant of contemporary leftist political writing, while maintaining their anarchist collectivist ideals—not an easy task in the increasingly corporate publishing world. It's a feat even more impressive when you realize that AK operates collectively while maintaining offices in two different countries on two different continents.

I had a chance to meet with collective members Craig Gilmore, Ramsey Kanaan and Craig O'Hara in their San Francisco warehouse.

Interview by **Megan Shaw**

Can you start by giving a little history? I understand AK Press started in England, then moved here.

Ramsey Kanaan: We've been going in Britain since 1990, at least that's when we registered with the state and became a legal entity—though we'd been around for several years before that. Then in 1994, I managed to persuade my comrades in Britain that we did so much business here in America that it would make sense for us to open up a publishing collective and distribution center here.

How many people are in the San Francisco collective?

RK: There are five of us.

Craig Gilmore: Ramsey's the only import. He's the one they sent over.

And how did you other guys get involved?

CG: Ramsey and I were eating mashed potatoes in New York and he told me they were looking to expand the collective, and I was looking for a job.

RK: When Craig joined, he became the only person in either the Great Britain or the American collectives who had any previous publishing experience. Prior to that, we had basically made everything up as we went along. Working that way, we had been able to do things that perhaps a more traditional group would not have thought of in terms of getting literature out in public places.

Like what?

RK: We were one of the first groups to make a concerted effort to sell in record and comic book stores, and also we took literature on the road, especially with bands. Those efforts kind of worked the book trade in nontraditional ways.

CG: As the established book trade crumbles around us, all the stupid things that these guys did when they didn't know any-

thing looked smarter and smarter. The stupid things they did five years ago are now genius acts.

Such as?

Craig O'Hara: Like establishing a mail order base of customers. As independent publishing crumbles and independent bookstores go out of business and there becomes more stuff that's not available anywhere else, we've got a huge core of customers that rely on us for mail order things.

So you're benefiting from independent bookstores going out of business?

CO: No, no. Don't be misled by that. The bulk of our business is still selling to stores. But if we didn't have that core of mailorder customers, which I think we have more than any other book publisher or distributor, we would definitely crumble along with the stores. But we also do direct sales at gigs and talk to people one-on-one and let them see things that they wouldn't be able to see elsewhere.

RK: We've really suffered, as has all of independent publishing, as a result of the growth of the chains and Amazon.com. Both in Britain and here, it's completely decimated the book trade. The independent bookstores and any independent book publishers are kind of natural outlaws for a variety of reasons. They are the natural outlet for that non-mainstream literature, and if they go, people can't get that stuff any more by and large. And secondly, it's a kind of symbiotic relationship. There's nowhere left for independent publishers to sell their books—it's a ripple effect. Given that stores are where we still sell in quantity our sales to bookstores are down by forty percent in the past year.

And that's directly attributable to Amazon, and the like?

RK: It's actually attributable to the fact that we don't have nearly as many retail customers anymore. Say we had 100 customers who were each buying two books a year. After a year we've only got 70 or 60 of those 100 left, because the stores we used to sell through have gone out of business. For example, we used to sell to four different stores in Austin, Texas, a large

college town. And now you don't have an independent bookstore left in Austin.

Not one?

RK: All four are gone. And we also have regularly distributed in Austin through independent record stores, but we just were told by friends there that now that Virgin is opening up a store there, there will be no independent record stores left in Austin. So there's a very real, tangible effect of the chain stores. It's similar in Britain. When I first started doing this 15 years ago in Britain, there was something called the Federation of Radical Booksellers, which had 120 members—120 bookstores that were not just *independent*, but identified themselves as *radical*. Now that's completely collapsed—I think there's about ten left. It's been a wholesale massacre.

I knew the situation for independent publishers was really, really bad, but I am still shocked by what you're saying. I would have thought that your readership would be differentiated enough from the Amazon.com buyers that Amazon wouldn't be in a position to steal your business.

RK: They are, but the problem is distribution and propaganda—getting stuff out there in the first place. If no one knows that we exist, or knows that this kind of literature exists, that's the problem. With the demise of independent bookstores, that's one less—or many fewer—chances that someone will wander into such a store. There's an access provided by the web, because people might wander on to our web site. And then there are those who might wander into an Avail show and see us there.

CG: A lot of our audience is young. When I was young, there were a lot of independent stores, and you found a lot of things just wandering around those stores. It's not a question of whether a store is stocked with what you're looking for, it's going into a store and finding something you're *not* looking for—discovering new literature because it's on the shelf in the store. If that opportunity doesn't exist, the Internet can't really replace that. Although we do sell a lot of books over the Internet,

there's still the question of how people can find or come in contact with anything that doesn't have an advertising budget behind it to push itself into peoples' faces.

RK: It's like the cliché that's said about punk: By and large, most people discover punk through discovering some other kind of music, and then the discovery trickles down. Perhaps you were first into heavy metal, and you saw that the members of Metallica wore Misfits t-shirts, so you bought the Misfits and then you bought

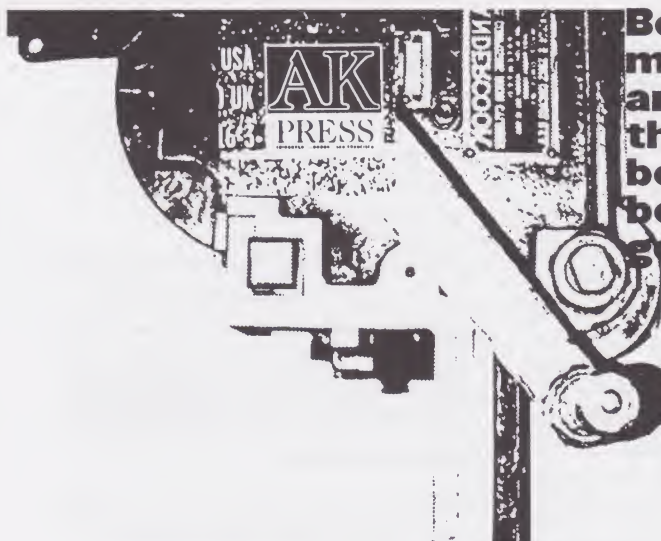
of people across the country who table at conferences and rallies, and book shows and clubs—wherever they think crowds will gather and we can sell books. Some of our best "retailers"—though that's not quite the right word—are tablers, individuals who don't have a storefront, who sell off tables and shelves.

RK: I think the other thing that's kept us afloat, for better or for worse, and it's one of the most successful ways of disseminating radical ideas is on CD. One of the

strictly on a parity; we're supposed to do the same amount of work and we're supposed to get paid the same.

Is your catalog the same here as in Britain? How is it different?

RK: On day-to-day terms, and largely economically, we are completely different organizations. There are all kinds of things that we can distribute over here and they can't, and vice versa. Some things are published by "major labels" in Britain, but are independently published here, or



Because one person argued vehemently and didn't really convince anyone else, but the others felt that if that one person felt the book was that bad, or was going to be that bad for AK, they were not going to support it any more.

ironies of capitalism is that CDs are cheaper to make than books, and relatively speaking you can sell them for more money.

Can you describe the organizational structure of your collective? You're a prolific organization that is spread over two countries. I'm curious how you structure labor amongst yourselves.

CO: We all have to agree on what we publish each year. But we don't have to have a conference to decide whether or not we'll distribute something every time someone publishes a new book—we do that here, one day a week. But although the Internet and e-mail has greatly enhanced our ability to keep in touch, we still have to meet once a year, either here or in Britain, to make a schedule of titles to publish. Plus, we discuss if we want to make any kind of rules—for lack of a better term—that will affect everyone, whether it's pay or health care. With that in mind, we do determine our own destiny. If we all agree that we want a raise, we get a raise. Everyone gets paid the same, including the people in Britain, which is a little tough to figure out mathematically. But we're organized

they have an exclusive distributor in Britain but not here. Similarly, in terms of day-to-day operations, we don't consult with them on whether we should buy a new computer, or whether we should risk giving credit to a new account. Although we tell them what we're doing, we don't consult with them necessarily. ¶ In terms of our organizational structure, there are a couple of central tenets. One is that you enter the organization with nothing and you leave with nothing. What that means is that we don't own the company, the company is a separate political project and it's crucial to maintain the integrity of that project. There actually are no owners. If someone leaves for whatever reason, if they were able to take assets with them, that would absolutely destroy us. Additionally, we have a somewhat complicated minority veto system that we use when voting on books. But we're a small enough organization, and we are all of similar enough political opinions that it rarely comes to a point when we have to use that system.

And is the organization structured identically in Britain?

RK: No, because legally we're a California Corporation. So we have our own internal rules that are different from the rules that

Dead Kennedys. For most people these kinds of options are not magically presented to them, they don't fall into someone's lap. So how do you as a publisher, without a big advertising budget, make people aware of what's out there?

How are you reacting to this decimation and the changes in the way publishing is distributed?

RK: We don't have any massive plan as such. I mean, our sales have actually remained about the same. If our sales to bookstores have dropped by 40 percent that's been made up in other ways. Certainly the Internet, for better or for worse, has increased sales. I think we've made pretty good progress in tabling various events, concerts, book fairs, and such.

CG: We have a plea in our catalog for people to think about tabling wherever they are. The problem is that doesn't quite count as a plan, because we've got to put this plea out. We'd love to have a network

govern the workings of California Corporations, in which, for instance, not everybody is paid the same. In Britain it's somewhat different because a workers' cooperative is an accepted legal entity, so they're legally set up as such. But in California we have to be set up differently, and work in accordance with workers' comp laws, et cetera. There are a variety of reasons for that, but one is just to be doing what we're doing on the level that we're doing it simply couldn't be done part time, or in spare time. But also as a political project, usually when the state or the powers that be become interested in political projects, they're usually closed down not for political reasons but because they infringed on some technicality or didn't pay their taxes. So we're completely official and above-board.

How do you decide what to publish and what to distribute?

CG: As Craig was saying, our decisions about what to publish are made by the entire collective on both sides of the Atlantic. Most publishing projects take more than a year or two to develop. We collect proposals over the course of a year, we e-mail back and forth, then we have this one face-to-face meeting in which we hash out what the state of each project is and how we evaluate each one. Then we'll set a publishing schedule for the year to 18 months following the meeting. Sometimes things come up suddenly, though. For example this week we got a proposal for a book on the WTO meeting in Seattle. We haven't really talked about that yet, but we might judge it to be an important book to do this year, but not important to do two years from now, which would be the normal gestation period of a book. So if we're going to consider that we have to e-mail the UK, send them the proposal, maybe

there'll be some anxious e-mails back and forth. Then we'd get part of the manuscript and send that over to the UK.

CO: Keep in mind also that when we decide what to publish or what to distribute, we don't all agree. There are several books that some of us would not like to see published, or things that we carry or don't carry that people are angry about, but that's part of human interaction.

You don't reach consensus on everything you do?

CO: No.

CG: There are two levels of opposition. There's indifference, and there's downright opposition: "I oppose us having this book in stock and I think it would be bad if we had it." That doesn't come up very often, but it does. As Ramsey was saying earlier, we have a minority veto. That means technically that among the five of us, any two of us can stop a decision. But there have also been a number of books, not a lot, but five or ten since I've been in the collective, that have been stopped by one person. Because one person argued vehemently and didn't really convince anyone else, but the others felt that if that one person felt the book was that bad, or was going to be that bad for AK, they were not going to support it any more.

RK: We're all reasonably mature adults. But in terms of what we publish and what we distribute, broadly speaking we have two criteria which are applied to anything we do. One is that we think it has some political merit and it's going to fit in with our political project. Secondly is that we think we can sell it. It may be that there's a book we feel is of crucial importance, but maybe we don't think, for whatever reason, we can sell any. Maybe it has a cover price of \$80, or maybe it's a subject too obscure, like a

1000 page in-depth study on the anarchists' approach to animal husbandry in the Spanish collectives. I'm sure that would be a pretty worthy and interesting book, but chances are we probably couldn't sell it—especially in university hard cover. We've often turned down books that fit within the DIY ethic. For instance we once turned down a book on how to build your own mud hut. I'm sure that fits a DIY housing ethic, but we didn't think we could sell it. It could also be that a valuable book is widely available and so there's no point in us putting it out too. There may be all kinds of books on how to fix your car, or how to construct a machine gun, which are certainly DIY, or how to assassinate your worst enemy, but those books are widely available, so there's no point in us carrying them.

CG: Unless we think we can sell a lot—we sell a lot of books on how to have sex. Despite the fact that everyone publishes them, we sell enough that they help pay the rent.

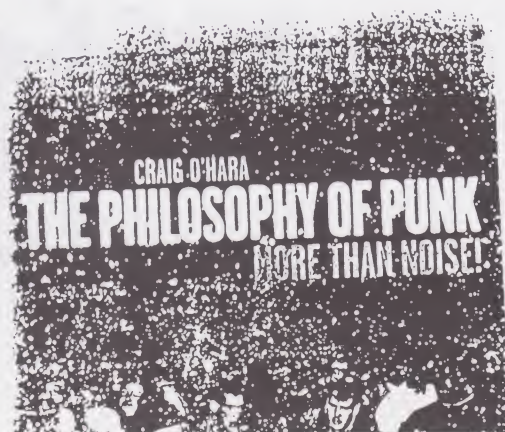
You distribute books from academic presses and mainstream commercial presses, right?

RK: We carry all independent publishers.

You count academic presses as independent?

RK: They're not owned by media conglomerates. But there have been many great books that have been published by not only larger independent presses, but by filthy corporate bastards. Any author who is dead, there is a good chance that their books were once published by a corporate press. Or for example, Howard Zinn's *People's History of the United States* was published by Rupert Murdoch, so we made the decision not to carry that valuable book. With one exception, we don't carry anything published by a corporate publishing conglomerate. But that

there have been many great books that have been published by not only larger independent presses, but by filthy corporate bastards. Any author who is dead, there is a good chance that their books were once published by a corporate press.



doesn't mean they don't publish good books—quite the opposite. And that was even more the case in the '60s and '70s. Plenty of books that were quite radical were published by Penguin and Random House. ¶ Of course, there are shifting levels of political worthiness versus salability, but there's nothing in this warehouse that we carry just to sell. There are a lot of books that we could sell a lot of that we think are rubbish. Everything in the catalog has some social or literary use, but it has been a debate in the past within AK whether or not we should carry "major label" books. Again, to give more contemporary examples, *Live from Death Row* by Mumia Abu-Jamal was published by a filthy corporate conglomerate, and so is Leonard Peltier's book. We have chosen not to carry those books, though we did end up picking up *Live from Death Row* as a remainder.

That's your exception?

RK: No, the exception was a publisher called Henry Holt and we made the decision to carry them largely because they carry Dee Brown, author of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, Mike Davis, author of *City of Quartz* and Black feminist bell hooks.

How does it work when you distribute books at shows? Do you have partnerships with venues or with bands or with promoters?

CO: Never the venue or the promoter. Sometimes the bands are friendly. Usually we know one of the persons associated with the band in some way. Either we have friends who are in the band or who are roadies and either they will be able to do it

or we will be able to move on in and do a table in the back. Sometimes the bands have no idea we're there. Hopefully the promoters have no idea we're there, otherwise they can make life hard if they're not down with what we're doing.

Even in punk clubs?

CO: Well it depends. There's a big difference between a punk show at Gilman Street and a punk show at Slim's. The same bands play them, but Gilman Street of course is very supportive of what we do, whereas Slim's is not.

RK: We've been very lucky in that we've had friends who are associated with certain bands who can crew with them and take our literature on the road.

Which bands?

CO: Well for instance Richard the Roadie is this fellow who tours with a lot of bands as a driver and a roadie and he tables at every stop of every tour of whatever band he's with. Recently he's done Citizen Fish and Avail. And there's a woman named Karoline Collins as well who does several bands. She roadies and sells merchandise and she sells AK stuff wherever she goes. Again this is not always entirely with the bands' support, but they let them do their thing. And there are a lot of smaller bands who take stuff along as well. A guy named Robert Collins, the husband of Karoline, has been in a couple of bands and has helped us out.

RK: Or if it's not that we have friends involved, then we'll have friends of friends. Recently we've tabled at Rage Against the Machine shows, which is prob-

ably the biggest corporate thing we've ever done. It's the only time we've ever tabled at an arena. And in that case the singer of the band somewhat knows us and is supportive of what we do. He also has a couple of friends who are in our circle who are very supportive of what we do. So it's kind of through the back door. That's not something we can do with whoever promotes the shows or the management of a coliseum. There are a lot of bands who are quite happy for us to table, and some of them are pretty popular, like NOFX. Whenever they play locally we table their shows because I'm old friends with Fat Mike.

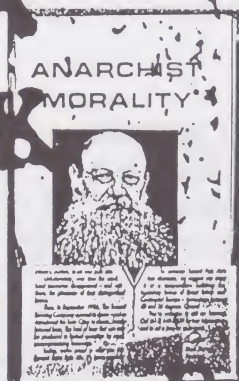
Plenty of bands think that what we're doing is cool. They may not buy anything or have any idea of the content of what we're distributing, but they're supportive insofar as we're an underground project.

CG: Tabling is also the best way to sell things because you get to talk to the people and take the measure of things.

RK: It's great to have communication with people on a one-to-one level. That's the best way to make an impact with people.

CG: It also is a good way for us to find out what's going on the street. A lot of people in book publishing barely talk to people in bookstores, and never talk to the people who actually buy the books and read them. If you're out at a table, you're talking to real consumers. When you've tabled a book, if you've packed it, taken it to a show, brought it back, put it back on the shelf, packed it again, unpacked it again, pretty soon you know that book stinks. You might love the book, but if you can't sell it, you have to give it up. ©

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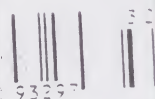
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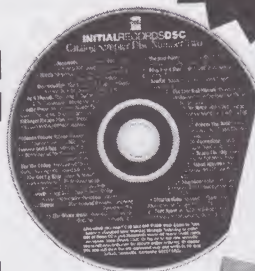
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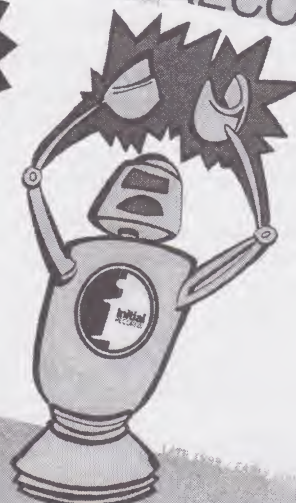
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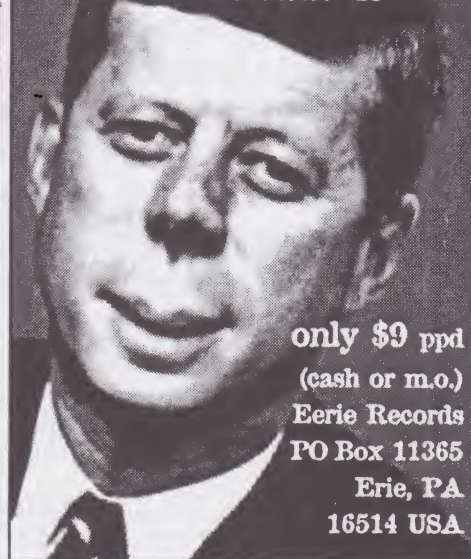
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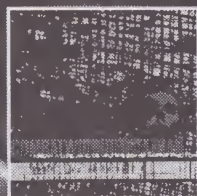
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TEXI



Sunday News-Gleaner
Sunday, December 1, 1991

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Defense begins

Camp gets prob...

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Victim's death
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Culture
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fatal result

17-year-old charged
in death of 'punk'

Fight days before
death

Amarillo

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D: 911. What's your emergency?

C: Yes, this is the same person
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D: (breaking in) Yes, yes, yes . . .

C: We need an ambulance.

D: OK. What happened?

C: Somebody has been injured.

D: OK. What happened?

C: I do not know. I was just told
to call an ambulance.

by Chris Ziegler

photos by Ray Walker



Jacqui Balderaz remembers Brian Deneke as the friend she talked to every day.

She remembers when he was arrested at an excessively noisy show and people were contributing twenties to help bail him out of jail. She remembers how he used to discipline his dog Stout with time-outs, warning people not to pet him when he was sent to sit in a corner. She remembers her friends making fun of him when starstruck middle-school kids would ask him to wear their band T-shirts, to give them that

special aura of authenticity.

She doesn't remember the moment when he was killed.

She remembers fighting to pull apart a circle of people kicking at Brian, who was "curled up in a ball" at their feet, she says. Then there's a blank, and suddenly she's standing in a completely different spot. She heard her friend Kristi scream, looked up, saw a car and saw Brian's face.

"It looked like he was hugging the car," she says.

An instant later, all of her friends were hysterical. Jason Deneke was racing to his brother's side. People she didn't know were running to help. She was calm, she says. She knelt down, worried that Brian might have a broken neck. She started rubbing his leg, in case he was cold. An ambulance showed up and paramedics moved everyone back. They surrounded Brian but just stood there, looking, she says.

"I said 'Why are you not doing anything? Is he OK?' and pulled one of them back to me," she says.

"The fireman said, 'No.' And I just fell to the ground."

...

On December 6, 1997, John King, then a self-described "gutterpunk," smashed out the window of a Cadillac driven by Tascosa High junior varsity football player Dustin Camp. Camp had tried to run him over after an altercation late that Saturday night, says King. He thought it was just one more close call in Amarillo, Texas—where being a punk could mean being a target.

King and his friends were used to being spit on, yelled at, chased, and sometimes beaten. Previously, Brian Deneke had been taken to the emergency room after attacks by pickup trucks full of assailants.

"If you look different in this town, you don't hardly have to leave your house to get fucked with," says King. "It'll definitely come to you."

Just a week after their previous run-in, on Friday, December 12, King and eight friends—all kids involved in the Amarillo punk scene—found themselves facing Dustin Camp, his Cadillac and a deserted shopping mall parking lot full of local high school students.

The punks said they hadn't come to fight, that they went to eat at the International House of Pancakes across the street because

in the middle of the night in the Amarillo, Texas, there's nothing else to do. Camp and his fellow students testified they hadn't come there to fight either. But within minutes, the police were called to break up a pitched battle between the two groups.

By the time they arrived, Brian Deneke was dead and Dustin Camp was speeding home. The police found blood on his Cadillac and Dustin Camp was charged with murdering Brian Deneke.

First Camp said his car skidded on some ice, and that he didn't mean to do it. But when he took the stand in a courtroom a year and a half later, he said he was trying to save a friend from being beaten to death by Brian Deneke.

"[Brian Deneke] was a violent individual and it took violence on Dustin Camp's part to put an end to further violence and to save an innocent life," said Warren Clark, Camp's attorney, at the trial. "You could even argue that he was destined to die the way he did."

After 13 days of testimony, the jury found Dustin Camp guilty—of manslaughter, not murder—and sentenced him to 10 years probation on September 1, 1999.

Clark told the *Amarillo Globe-News* that he felt the jury had done the right thing.

"We hung our heads," says Dave Trew, a friend of both Deneke brothers. "Legally, they had murdered us."

...

"[We] went to the IHOP every night, because there ain't shit else to do in this town," John King says. "[We'd] just drink coffee all night and hang out."

It was Saturday, December 6th. Several tables down from King and his friend Chris Oles sat Dustin Camp, his date Phyllis Raef and a group of Tascosa High students, decked out in formal dress after an evening out at the Crystal Ball dance. Oles walked past them on the way to the restroom, six feet of spikes, mascara and lovingly handpainted leather. He felt them watching him, he says.

"I had never seen them before in my life that I knew of—I thought they were going to ask me a question," he says.

They did, Oles says: "What the fuck are you looking at, faggot?"

That week at IHOP had been particularly trying, Oles said later. Every night so far, someone had bounced an insult in his direction. By Saturday night, he was tired of it.

"If it was just you and me," he told someone he later learned was a Tascosa junior named Justin Devore, "and you didn't have all your friends with you, you wouldn't say that."

Dustin Camp declined to participate in an interview for this article for legal reasons. At trial, Camp and his friends told a different story, with Phyllis Raef testifying that Chris Oles had provoked them and flashed a knife.

Oles denies having a knife, and says that as he slid back into the booth with King, the Tascosa kids flipped them off and kept cursing at them. Oles blew kisses and winked back, then got up to take a phone call at the front. Camp and his friends stood and followed.

King met them as they gathered before Oles and the yelling started. Camp poked King in the chest, King says and King shoved him back. In response, Potter County Deputy Sheriff Jerry Jackson—charged with keeping an eye on IHOP's rowdier clientele—

hustled Camp's party out the door. "We'll be waiting across the street," they shouted, Oles and King remember. "We're going to kick your ass!"

Inside, Oles called a friend, Kendra Pettitt, and told her, "You better come get us, we're gonna get jumped." Someone got Jason and Brian Deneke from a nearby Denny's. Kendra Pettitt, Jessica Jackson and Brady Clark met them outside IHOP.

Parked across the street in the deserted Western Plaza Mall parking lot were at least two cars: Dustin Camp's and Tascosa student Bryan Kelley's. King and Brian ran across the street to confront them, King says, followed by their friends. Camp testified that there were "six or seven" people surrounding his car. Deputy Jackson, across the street, called police when he saw "14 or 15" punks and a group of people approaching them from parked pickup trucks.

Brian went up to Kelley's truck, told him to leave because "he wasn't part of this," says King. Kelley promptly left. Then King and Brian approached Camp, who was sitting in his suit in his mother's Cadillac—he had borrowed the car for his date that night, Camp testified later. Camp locked the doors and wouldn't look at him, King says.

"Do you have a problem?" King demanded. "Why don't you get out of your car if you have a fucking problem?"

After a second of silence, Camp started his car and aimed it at the punks.

"He was driving through guys, trying to run them over," says Oles. On the phone with police, Deputy Jackson saw a Cadillac heading for a cluster of punks. Camp later testified that the punks were "latched on" to his car and trying to block his escape. He denied trying to run anyone over that night.

As Camp sped by, the punks jumped out of the way and King smashed a retractable police baton he frequently carried into the front windshield. The glass cracked and Camp's car, said the punks, hopped the curb onto Western Avenue and headed for nearby Interstate 40.

"We figured we'd never see them again," says King. "That was it."

...

"Those guys have a real big issue with pride," says Heather Smith, then a sophomore at Tascosa High. "That's why all their cars are so big."

After 12 years of private school, Smith entered Tascosa High determined to carve out a place for herself in high school society. She made the varsity basketball team, was elected to student council

and participated in several clubs, she says. But her crowning achievement was situating herself into the school's elite—a crowd that "half the kids in school want to be and the other half despise."

Tascosa's elite were kids from rich families in Amarillo's Wolflin neighborhood, active in football, basketball and baseball and student council. All could be distinguished by their trademark white baseball caps.

"They all have at least three hats like that. They run them over with their trucks to make it look like they've had them for a while," Smith says. "They do a lot of stupid things like that."

Smith was a freshman when she met Dustin Camp.

"He wasn't a guy you called up to find out what's going on that weekend, he was just a guy who always showed up," Smith says.

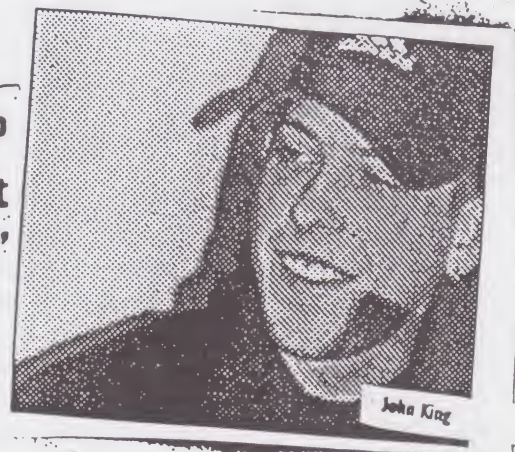
Camp hadn't attended private school like Smith, whose dad is a doctor and whose mother is a psychologist. Instead, he'd attended Wolflin Elementary. His parents own and work at Stanton Automotive. He drove a 1983 Cadillac while his dad drove a 1982 Ford Ranger. Still, Camp managed to become part of the in-crowd, overcoming what Smith called "the most judgment I ever faced" to befriend the old money, new car Wolflin kids.

Dustin Camp was "well-liked by a lot of people," one of his friends later told the *Amarillo Globe-News*. Teachers described him as a student "[you] look forward to having." He made consistent As and Bs and was never late to class his junior year, according to school records. He played JV football, practicing hard and training diligently, said coaches.

"He's funny, fun to be around," long-time friend and Tascosa sophomore Ashley McAvoy told the *Globe-News*.

Heather Smith remembers Camp's sense of humor—"He's

Punks went to the Amarillo IHOP every night "because there ain't shit else to do in this town," says John King.



one of those guys that could try to laugh his way out of anything," she says—as well as his aggressive side. When she was 13, her best friend lived across from the Camps, and Smith sometimes spent afternoons with him. Once, during a squirt gun fight, Camp tied a neighbor kid to a tree and spent an hour and a half pouring water on him, she says.

"We were out there forever and [the neighbor] was shivering and screaming and Dustin was just having a great time," she says. "He's always been real competitive and had extreme ways of proving it, so there's no doubting he's the best or he won."

...

The week after John King smashed Dustin Camp's windshield, rumors started among Tascosa High students that there was going to be a fight at the IHOP on Friday, December 12.

"I don't know what the first word was, but by the time I heard it, it was 40 times out of proportion," says Smith. "It starts 'there's gonna be a fight' and it turns into World War Three."

At the trial, Camp himself was vague about what was sup-

alumni there who knew Wynn, Thompson said. Around 10:00 p.m., both Camp and Thompson's testimony agree that the group, now larger, then decided to move again.

"The guys were saying, 'Well, it's about time,'" Elise Thompson said later in court. "Let's go meet up at IHOP."

Camp testified that about a dozen people left for IHOP. But Thompson testified she had arrived with Camp and 10 or 12 people from Escobar's party and met more at Wynn's. She believed



Jacqui Balderaz and Chris Oles

Chris Oles had a bad feeling the night of Brian Deneke's death. "The whole way up, I was like, 'Let's stay home.' We had a right to go up if we wanted, [but] I was almost pleading with them. It was kind of weird."

posed to happen. "I had heard that Friday there was going to be a fight up there. I did not know who it was going to be between," he testified. "Well, I knew one group was going to be the punks. I didn't know who the other group was going to be."

"Yet everyone of those people who have testified, yourself included, who did not know about this and did not know why it was going to happen had no intention of fighting?" Prosecutor Pat Murphy asked Camp. "Every one of you show up on time and everyone of you ended up across that street involved, didn't you?"

"Yes," Camp replied.

At about 8:00 p.m. that Friday night, Camp and Tascosa junior and varsity football team tight end Rob Mansfield went to Oscar Escobar's house in Camp's Cadillac, Camp testified. He said they weren't drinking, though police later found an 18 pack of Bud Light with only a few beers left and a half empty bottle of Crown Royal in his trunk. Camp said they were left over from the week before.

There, Camp and Mansfield met up with Elise Thompson. Thompson was a junior at Tascosa who would later graduate as valedictorian in 1999. She'd attended the same private school as Heather Smith, who called her "just one of the sweetest people. I've never heard a lie or a mean thing come out of her mouth." She did not respond to a request for an interview, but testified at trial later. Rob Mansfield was one of her best friends.

At Escobar's, Camp and his friends drank some beers and played pool while the girls talked. Then the party moved to Tascosa alumnus Nathan Wynn's house, Thompson testified, where there was barely enough room to sit down. Besides all the Tascosa kids who had been at Escobar's, there was a group of

nearly everybody who had been at Wynn's went to IHOP.

Thompson caught a ride with Camp, sitting in the back seat of his Cadillac, and on arrival, saw that "the parking lot was so full we ended up in the parking lot next door."

"It was all people that I knew," Thompson testified. She didn't see anyone who looked like a punk.

...

Chris Oles didn't want to go to IHOP that night, even though that's where he went almost every night after finishing his job selling gravesites by phone for the Memorial Park Cemetery—IHOP was a "home away from home," he says—and even though the rumors of a fight were no different than the rumors they heard almost every week, he was nervous. Earlier in the week Oles told the IHOP manager he'd heard there might be trouble on Friday night.

"I had a bad feeling," he says. "The whole way up, I was like, 'Let's stay home.' We had a right to go up if we wanted, [but] I was almost pleading with them. It was kind of weird."

John King wasn't worried.

"We always heard shit," he says. "It was like a once a week thing. We didn't think anything of it." But "just in case" he told his friends to meet him there. In the trunk of his car he had a metal baseball bat and at his side he had the baton he says he "always carried, in case I got jumped."

Brian had the chain and lock he kept with after being attacked several times, friends say.

When they left for IHOP, some of the other punks had chains and combat boots—"basic clbthing stuff," says Jacqui Balderaz—but were otherwise unarmed, she says.

"We weren't there looking for a fight," says Brian's brother Jason Deneke.

The punks had been hanging out drinking—some said only a few beers, some said all day—when Oles got home from work. Brian was a "little drunk," says Balderaz, "but he could handle it." Brian's blood alcohol content would later test out at .19, nearly twice the legal limit.

But Oles was sober when he, Brian and Jason Deneke, Balderaz and Julie Hollifield left for IHOP in Hollifield's car. When they turned onto Western, they had to keep driving, because the IHOP parking lot was full, with cars spilled over into adjacent streets, they said. This was at three hours before the usual 2:00 a.m. post-bar rush and none of the punks had ever seen the IHOP so crowded.

"Right when we walked up to the front door, there was a mob of kids screaming and yelling at us and telling us they were going to kick our ass," Oles says. He spotted his friend J.T. Clifton standing outside and, with Hollifield on one arm and Balderaz on the other, he stepped inside to see if any other friends were there.

Meanwhile, John King pulled up outside, with Jennifer Hix and Kristi Kachaniuk. As soon as he shut off his car, a truck pulled up and blocked him in, he says, and a crowd surrounded the car, telling him to "get the fuck out."

"I got out of my car and whipped out my baton and the people backed off some," he says.

Oles found no familiar faces in the IHOP. He was on his way back outside when the manager, who was yelling at the crowd in the parking lot to go home, stopped him. He pointed across Western into the Plaza parking lot and said, "Your friends are getting jumped."

"It looked like about 20 people fighting, and I thought, 'Maybe our friends showed up,'" he says. "But then I thought, 'We don't have that many friends.' And I looked and realized they were all beating on one person — Brian."

The Deneke brothers had been separated from Oles and the girls soon after arriving at IHOP, and now Brian was curled up in a ball on the asphalt at the feet of six or seven guys, his brother says. Oles met King at his car and King handed him the baseball bat. Oles, nervous, held it against his leg so it wouldn't be as obvious, he says.

Elise Thompson had gone inside IHOP to meet some of her friends and when she came out, she testified she saw two punks, one tall and wearing a brightly colored leather jacket and one shorter, with short hair, waving bats and batons and screaming. She couldn't remember what the tall one said, but the short one, she testified, said, "I think we can take them." Mansfield called to her and said they were leaving, so she hurried back to Camp's car.

King and Oles were running across Western as a red Chevy Blazer roared past, clipping King's leg. King smashed out the back window with his baton and hit several other cars as they passed, then ran with Balderaz and Kachaniuk to Brian. "He was getting beat up by a shitload of guys," King says. "We were beating people, just trying to get them off."

King's baton connected heavily with Tascosa junior Justin Devore's head, King says, splitting his scalp and knocking him

into semiconsciousness. Brian stood up and shook himself off.

"He said 'I'm OK,'" King says. "He didn't look too beat up. So we all started to back away and find a way to get the fuck out."

...

Camp's Cadillac was moving across Western towards the Plaza with Elise Thompson in the back seat and Rob Mansfield up front. Thompson saw kids running toward the Western Plaza lot.

Camp was silent, "concentrating," he later said in court, as he threaded his Cadillac through clots of people fighting. Thompson testified that she saw people being beaten by "a circle" of punks. On the pavement was Tascosa junior and basketball player Andrew McCulloch.

"Oh my god, look what they're doing to Andrew," Thompson remembered Camp saying, panicked—McCulloch was one of Camp's "close friends," she testified.

"He seemed to snap," Thompson testified. Mansfield tried to get out of the car, but Camp wouldn't let him, Thompson said. Instead, he swerved towards Chris Oles, who Thompson said was on the edge of the group attacking McCulloch.

Oles says he had been loping alone towards Brian's attackers, bat still against his leg, when Camp's car came up behind him.

"I didn't see the car and I wasn't near anyone and he got me," he says. "It all happened really fast. I remember being on the hood—I was on the car and off the car." Oles rolled off and hit the ground on his back hard enough to bounce the metal bat out of his hands. Dazed for a moment, he struggled to his feet, grabbed for the bat and was hit in the leg by a beer bottle. Police later found beer bottles and cans of Bud Light scattered across the parking lot.

"I thought, 'Now I'm gonna get killed,'" he says. "There were so many kids. I was trying to get towards a light pole or something because I thought the car was going to come back." Someone threw a pool cue at him and he grabbed it off the ground and ran for a streetlight. Then he looked over and saw Brian.

Oles says Brian was "nowhere near" anyone else. John King says he saw Oles get hit and then saw a car line up on Brian, whom he also says was alone.

Inside Camp's Cadillac, the view wasn't quite the same.

Thompson said Camp wasn't responding as Mansfield kept repeating, "Stop, let's go, let's get out of here."

After hitting Oles, Camp testified he had reversed and headed back to Western, but swung the Cadillac around to make sure McCulloch was on his feet. That's when he spotted Brian Deneke.

In court, Camp said he saw Brian hitting Justin Devore with a club. Thompson agreed, testifying that Brian appeared to be attacking someone she couldn't recognize with a club or stick.

But Chris Oles saw Brian running from the car, he says. He saw Brian turn and strike the car with the chain he always carried.

"It looked like it really pissed off [the driver] when Brian hit the car [with the chain]. It seemed like he stepped on the gas," Oles says. "It looked like a monster, like this metal monster coming after him."

Thompson testified that Camp never swerved away or tried to slow down. She saw Brian turn and met his eyes just as the Cadillac caught him.

"[Brian] was looking at us, when the car impacted him. His body came up on the hood and rolled underneath the car," she testified. "I felt two bumps and I prayed it was the median that we were going over. And then I looked back, since I was in the back seat, and I saw him lying there. There was a pool of blood and he just looked very befuddled and then I saw a girl run to him. And that's all I saw."

Brian slid up and off the hood and under the front of the car as Oles watched.

"My first thought was find the first person I don't know and take their head off," he says, but then he let the bat and the pool cue drop from his hands and ran to Brian.

"I knew he was dead, automatically," he says. "No one could live through that."

Jennifer Hix and Jason Deneke were already there and as Jason cradled his brother in his arms, the crowd of high school kids cheered.

"It was the sickest thing, and you probably don't read about it," Oles says, "but they cheered."

Inside the car, there was silence. Mansfield stopped yelling,

"It was like a movie," she says. "Everyone all pushed back in a corner, crying and screaming but I couldn't hear. I just saw their mouths open."

The police threw two of the high school kids in the back seat with Balderaz, figuring that the Abercrombie and Fitch shirt she happened to be wearing marked her as one of their crowd, she thinks.

As the car pulled out of the Western Plaza lot on the way to the police station, Balderaz saw Brian's body, lying by a snowdrift and still uncovered by a blanket, and started crying even harder. One kid knew her from school and tried to put his arm around her, she says.

She reared up and hit him across the face.

...

Heather Smith says she had been at a rave with friends and saw the sirens as soon as she turned on to Western. Her friend Johna Auhoy, a fellow Tascosa student, was standing in the Plaza parking lot.

"I'm so sorry, Heather, I'm so sorry," he said, starting to sob.

"Johna, what'd you all do?" she cried, and Auhoy ran away without answering.

Then she heard an officer describing a light-colored Cadillac—a car she recognized.

"It's fucking Dustin," I thought, and I started to cry," Smith says.

Camp had left the Plaza and was headed east on I-40,

driving in silence. At the next exit, Thompson testified that she leaned forward into the front seat and asked, "What if he's dead?"

No one answered.

On the way home, they met Bryan Kelley in his truck, and Camp and Kelley talked for a moment more before splitting up. Camp stopped to let Thompson and Mansfield out at Thompson's house and spoke. She repeated the conversation in court.

"You all don't have to go down with me. It wasn't you all's fault," he said. "You weren't in the car."

"We were in Bryan's truck," Mansfield said.

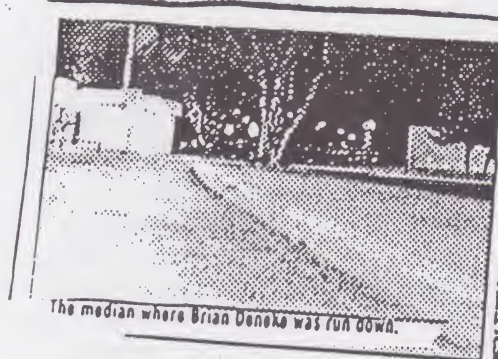
"No, we were here," Thompson said.

"[Elise], you don't know how serious this is," Mansfield answered—he was "terrified," Thompson testified.

"I said, 'No, we were here, and right after that Dustin started crying,'" she told the court.

As Mansfield climbed out of the Cadillac, Camp was in tears, banging his head into the steering wheel. "It's going to be OK," Mansfield told him. He put his arm around Camp before he left.

An hour or two later, at about 1:00 a.m., Justin Devore called from the hospital, where he had received eight stitches and three internal staples after John King had hit him with his baton, and told them Brian Deneke was dead.



The median where Brian Deneke was run down.

Camp's car looked like a "metal monster" coming after Brian, says Oles.

shocked dumb, Thompson said. Then, according to Thompson's testimony, Camp spoke.

"I'm a ninja in my Caddy," he muttered softly. "I bet he liked that one."

...

The first 911 call came in at 11:13 p.m.—an employee from IHOP called the Amarillo Police Department and reported a "major fight" at the Western Plaza, with about "10 or 15" people.

Less than two minutes later, a caller on a cell phone said they'd just seen a "beige colored Cadillac" with three people inside involved in a hit and run. They gave police a license plate number.

Another caller said she'd seen around 40 kids fighting in Western Plaza and that one of them had almost been run over.

By 11:16 p.m., IHOP was back on the line: "We need an ambulance," the caller said. "Somebody has been hit by a car." One IHOP employee later told the Globe-News that "five or six" punks came running in, screaming, "They killed him!"

After Jacqui Balderaz collapsed, she was locked inside a police car and watched the parking lot through glass windows so thick that no outside sound could make it in.

...

"We used to make fun of [Brian] for being a punk rock icon," Jessica Jackson says. "All the little kids looked up to him—he probably thought it was cool, but he was embarrassed at the same time."

When he was a little kid himself, Brian Deneke wore a Boy Scout scarf—not a mohawk. But when he started skateboarding and hanging out at Amarillo's independent music venue, the Retina, the transformation began. "Punk rock came out of all that," remembers his brother Jason.

"We were worried about what Brian and Jason were getting into," says his father Mike Deneke. "It was kind of foreign and we had the normal reactions that most parents did."

They knew some of Brian and Jason's friends had "problems," he says, but came to understand why their son was dying his hair and selling records and T-shirts to other kids at no profit to himself.

"For Brian, it was a statement against the mainstream, about being so strong and not conforming," Mike Deneke says. "He wasn't part of that preppy jock mentality."

By the time he was 17, Brian dropped out of Amarillo High, earning a G.E.D. the same year, and moving into an apartment over the Egg, the successor to the Retina. He washed dishes and put the proceeds towards bolstering Amarillo's scene by booking shows with his brother.

"He was the major reason some of the better bands came to town—he'd write and beg them to come, tell them they could stay at his house," says Chris Antle, a senior at Amarillo High. "He used his own money to pay for the booking."

Mike and Betty Deneke knew some of their son's friends had "problems," Mike Deneke says, but worked to understand why their son was dying his hair and selling records and T-shirts to other kids at no profit to himself.



Betty and Mike Deneke

Some shows went better than others—one night, the police showed up to shut down a concert and poetry reading and Brian went out into the street yelling at them, eventually getting arrested—but more and more kids started showing up.

"The scene was so tight when Brian was around," says Jackson. "There were so many kids, and they all used to hang out." At the I-40 punk house, the living room would be packed to capacity when *The Simpsons* came on, with "little heads all over the floor," she remembers.

One year, Brian and girlfriend Jennifer Hix hitchhiked up the

East Coast with a black puppy Brian had been given by some gangster kids who used to come to shows. They left Amarillo for Richmond, New York and beyond. When they came back, the puppy had grown into his name—Stout. Brian used to take him to shows, Jackson remembers, and Stout would chase Brian around the circle pit.

"[Brian] would try and get people to dance," she says. "He'd say, 'Look, my dog's more hardcore than you!'"

Stanley Marsh III, best known as the local wealthy eccentric responsible for a neo-Stonhenge made of cars along Interstate 40, took a liking to Brian and, after he turned 18, gave him a job—once paying him to attach jingle bells to his Mohawk and scurry around a downtown bank.

Brian and a crew of other artists painted bizarre road signs for Marsh and helped install them around town, some featuring punk rockers with blue-green spikes—not too different from Brian himself. Brian also conducted tours of the Marsh estate in full punk regalia, leading elementary school children around while wearing his Filth shirt.

"[The children's] favorite was always Brian. They would write letters thanking [us] for letting them come visit and every one mentioned Brian," says Jackie Anderson, Marsh's project manager and Brian's supervisor. "He was one of the sweetest people I've ever known and the best employee I ever had. He truly cared for fellow human beings as much as anyone I ever met."

At work, they even called him "Sunshine," because he brightened up everyone's day, Anderson says. But back home in Amarillo, he had a different nickname: "Fist Magnet."

...

"He had become a symbol of the punk scene and an obvious target," his father says. "You don't get a nickname like that if you're not jumped frequently."

Chris Antle remembers Brian being jumped by a truckful of guys in broad daylight while out walking and says he started carrying the chain with a lock on the end for protection.

"[Brian] wasn't afraid," he says, "but he wasn't stupid."

Jackie Anderson says Brian would come into work bruised and battered on occasion. "I'd ask him what happened and he'd say 'I was just walking down Paramount [Avenue] and five preps

got out of a car and beat me up."

"If you wear leather or had your hair spiked or were flying the flag, you looked over your shoulder when you walked to the beer store," says Dave Trew. "If they caught you alone, they'd beat you—and it'd never be one of them, it'd be four or five. I'm amazed someone hasn't died before this."

"Here it's just really bad," explains Jason Deneke. "Any big city I've been to, there are no problems and no one gives you a second look."

It's not a problem unique to Amarillo, but something small town punks across the country have had to deal with, says Oles.


"It happens all over the place. People are afraid of punks in little towns," he says. "It may be the Bible Belt, but people still judge each other before they know them." Dave Trew says that "back before punk rock, [it was] anything that was different." As a high school freshman in the 1980s, he remembers when the football team broke into his friends' house with bats and "terrorized"

Word had gone out that there was to be no retaliation against the Camps from any of the other groups on Amarillo's fringe that were on good terms with the punks—intense personal emotions aside, the punks were afraid any counterattack would boomerang back on them tenfold. Extra police officers were posted at local high schools and kept cruising by Casa de Punk, but harassment of the punks continued into the week anyway.

Oles was walking Stout when a truck full of kids ran up alongside him and started yelling at him to fight, he says. Someone else threw a car stereo out their window at Julie Hollifield as they drove by her, says King. Kara Lurette, a punk girl with band stickers on the back of her car and her year old child in her back seat, was run off the road, Oles says.

"It got worse after Brian died," Jacqui Balderaz says. "We were scared to go anywhere by ourselves. They wouldn't even leave us alone to grieve."

At a memorial show for Brian held the day of his midmorn-



"If you wear leather or had your hair spiked or were flying the flag, you looked over your shoulder when you walked to the beer store," says Dave Trew. "If they caught you alone, they'd beat you—and it'd never be one of them, it'd be four or five. I'm amazed someone hasn't died before this."

his family. "[It was] absolutely fucking appalling," he says.

John King says he was routinely harassed and spit on in high school. Jessica Jackson remembers the truck that kept circling the block, yelling out, "Hey, faggot!"—"I'm a girl!" she yelled back. Dave Trew says he was chased by a pickup truck full of "apes" across medians and the wrong way down one way streets.

"We aren't people who look for trouble and I don't want to sound like I'm whining, but never once have I seen a group of punk rock kids jump someone wearing a white baseball cap," Trew says. "They're not going to go out and hate someone because they're different than they are."

The morning after Brian was killed, Dustin Camp was arrested. He spent a few hours in a cell at the Amarillo Police Department but was released that afternoon, after his \$100,000 bail was paid.

That same Saturday morning, someone broke out the windows at "Casa De Punk," a well-known punk house on Tyler Street where Brian's friends had retreated, everyone together, drinking from several kegs of donated beer.

ing funeral—Balderaz had to sneak out of a final to attend—Oles says, "all that tension and aggression just came out," when his band Cabinet Crisis went on.

"It was the best show we ever played," he says. "All the aggression and tension just came out. People pulled me off stage into this huge mob—they were going crazy."

"People were moshing and crying and singing along," says Balderaz. "All these punk kids with no other place to fit in."

• • •

"This is not a case of diversity or tolerance or judging people by the way they dress. This case is about a gang of young men who choose a lifestyle ... designed to intimidate those around them, to challenge authority and to provoke reaction from others," said Camp's attorney Warren Clark in his opening statement. "We submit that when you talk of tolerance, these punks—this gang—are the most intolerant of all."

It was August 24, 1999, the first day of Dustin Camp's trial. Local opinion was volatile enough that courtroom security was as tight as it would have been for a capital murder case. Camp's

family and friends watched from one side of the aisle, Deneke's from the other. Spectators had to pass through metal detectors and the punks were split up when they went on smoke breaks, Jessica Jackson says.

"I could have told you the night this happened that this would be a high profile case," says Rebecca King, District Attorney for Amarillo's Potter County. "There are 25 of us in this office and a true half were put to use. There was no specialist we didn't pull."

The state's case against Dustin Camp hinged on proving that Camp deliberately hit Brian Deneke with his Cadillac with the intent to cause "serious bodily injury." Besides the punks who were there that night and several independent witnesses who watched the fight from across the street, the state would call Elise Thompson and Rob Mansfield to the stand.

"We believe that the evidence will convince you beyond a reasonable doubt that this was not an accident, that this was not justified, and that [Camp] intentionally and knowingly murdered Brian Deneke," prosecutor John Coyle told the jury in his opening statement.

Warren Clark had a different story for the jury.

Dustin Camp, Clark said, killed Brian "out of loyalty" to his friends Justin Devore and Andrew McCulloch and, if back in that same situation, he would do it again.

"If this is not self-defense of a best friend than the law has no meaning," he said. "It is important ... to understand how these young men [punks] think and behave and conduct themselves. You scratch the surface of all this talk of diversity and tolerance and looking different and you will still find pure naked aggression. The lesson of this case is [that] aggression has consequences."

David Trew was in the courtroom that day and says right then, he knew how the trial would end.

"We had to sit there and listen to Warren Clark insult us. I couldn't believe people bought it," he says. "They didn't put Dustin on trial, they put Brian on trial."

Clark asked how many tattoos Brian had, how many piercings, says Jessica Jackson. He asked the doctor who had performed Brian's autopsy whether his .19 blood alcohol level would have made him "even more" aggressive. He said the punks came "dressed for combat," with "clubs, pool cues, sticks, bats and chains." The jury saw Brian's chain and his combat boots with two-inch heels and his camouflage fatigues. When his Filth shirt reading "Destroy Everything" was held up, there was an audible gasp, Jackson says.

Clark called three witnesses to testify to Brian's character. One was a Boy Scout troop leader who, when arguing with Brian over his skateboard in middle school, said he'd never seen eyes as cold and dark as Brian Deneke's. The other two were police officers who had arrested Brian, one when he was 16 and one the following year.

The first incident occurred at the show police were called to on a noise complaint. Officer Jeff Stevenson arrested Brian for disorderly conduct and interfering with a public servant after weathering repeated obscene insults and watching Brian try to "get other people involved," he testified. The second arrest came

on a charge of criminal mischief after Brian threw a rock through a car window shortly before dropping out of high school, said Cpl. Richard Weathers.

To attest to Dustin Camp's character, Warren Clark called his Presbyterian pastor and his junior varsity football coach.

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The state, says District Attorney King, couldn't wage an offense based on image.

"Defense attorneys don't have to prove anything," she says. "[For us] to say those sorts of things is a waste of time. We have to present what we can prove he did."

So Pat Murphy, who had over thirty years of trial experience, and John Coyle, who King calls a "fine young attorney," set out to prove what Dustin Camp did.

On the night of the 6th, when Camp, Oles and King had exchanged insults, Camp denied trying to run over the punks, against testimony to the contrary by two law enforcement officers, the IHOP night manager, as well as King and the punks.

The night of the 12th, Camp—echoing earlier testimony from other Tascosa kids—said that the rendezvous at IHOP was only to watch a fight, not to participate. He was driving across Western when he saw his close friend Andrew McCulloch being attacked by a group of heavily armed punks, and deliberately hit Chris Oles to keep him from away from McCulloch. Camp then said he reversed and circled around to see if McCulloch had recovered.

"I went back to check to see if Andrew had made it back up by that time," he testified. "[And] I looked to my left and saw Brian Deneke chasing my friend Justin Devore with a bat in his hand." Camp testified that Brian had caught up to Devore and was hitting him repeatedly, but the blows "weren't connecting like, real heavily."

But John King testified, at peril of later prosecution, that he had already cracked Devore's skull open thirty seconds earlier in a different section of the parking lot. At the hospital, prosecutor Murphy said, Devore was treated only for his head wound and reported no additional injuries. Devore was unable to identify his assailant.

Elise Thompson, in the back seat of Camp's Cadillac, knew Devore but was unable to recognize the person she saw fighting with Brian Deneke.

Across the street, Vassar Cates, who knew both Justin Devore and some of the punk kids, said he saw Devore down on the other side of the lot, and said Brian was running from Camp's Cadillac, alone.

"He looked over his shoulder at the car. He changed direction and the car changed direction and followed him," he testified.

In an oral confession taped the day after Camp killed Brian Deneke, Camp said "There was ice over there and when I hit my brake, my car just kept going. He like slipped on the ice or something and the car ... went over him." But Thompson testified Camp had never attempted to slow down and in court Camp admitted that his original statement was "probably not the case." Camp told police in 1997 that he was alone in his car, until they advised him they had taken Thompson and Rob Mansfield's statement the night before.

When Thompson testified about Camp's "I'm a ninja in my caddy—I bet he liked that one," remark, Brittany Todd was sitting on the Camp side of the courtroom, too late to get a seat across the aisle.

"You could have already heard a pin drop," she says. "It shook everyone."

Camp sat examining his fingernails while Thompson testified, Todd says. He later denied the statement.

"I've never used that phrase in my life," he told prosecutor Murphy.

Dr. Marc Krouse performed an autopsy on Brian three days after he was killed. While Warren Clark asked Dr. Krouse about Brian's tattoos and his blood alcohol level, Murphy asked how Brian died. According to Dr. Krouse, Brian had been crushed by a motor vehicle and that the first point of impact was on the back of his right calf—confirming accounts that Brian had his back to the Cadillac.

Murphy questioned whether Camp could have managed to strike Brian from behind while avoiding hitting Justin Devore, who would have been on the asphalt in front of Brian trying to fend off an attack.

"You felt compelled to drive through that young man to save Justin?" Murphy asked.

"Yes," Camp said.

"And you managed to do that without running over Justin?" he asked.

"Yes," Camp answered.

And when Warren Clark started talking, they all started nodding."

Dustin Camp had opted to have the jury—five women and seven men with outgoing Amarillo Chamber of Commerce President Bud Joyner as foreman—determine his sentence as well as his guilt or innocence. He had been indicted on a murder charge but the jury had the option of finding him guilty of the lesser charge of manslaughter.

In his closing statement, Prosecutor Coyle laid out the facts of their case. He said Camp never tried to slow down, that Brian was armed only with a chain and that Justin Devore was on the other side of the parking lot when Brian was hit.

Prosecutor Murphy concentrated on Camp's ninja comment.

"His words are not the words of anyone who is in fear for himself or anyone else," Murphy said. "His words are the words of someone who is angry and has accomplished what he wanted to do, which was get even."

Then Warren Clark made his closing argument.

"Somewhere in the infinite processes that make a boy into a man, something happened to Brian Deneke," he said. "What Dustin Camp faced out there was a mean drunk with a weapon."

After a four hour deliberation, the jury found Camp guilty of manslaughter. A murder conviction could have put Camp in jail for anywhere from five to 99 years, but manslaughter carries a maximum sentence of only 20 years. Because Camp had never been convicted of a felony, he was eligible for probation. The jury would deliver his sentence the next day, after final arguments on punishment.



Jennifer Hix and Jessica Jackson

Moments after the trial, a woman stopped Jessica Jackson and Jennifer Hix on the street and asked, "Were you at the trial? What did he get?" When Jackson told her the sentence, the woman started crying.

"You would do it again?" Murphy continued.

"After all of the pain and the agony that my friends and family have been through over this, and the Deneke family and all them, I probably—I would have got out of my car," Camp said. "I would have gone and run and helped him, you know? If I had got beat down with a bat, it would have been better than going through all of this."

...

Jessica Jackson was watching the five women, seven man jury before they delivered their sentence.

"There was a Hispanic lady in the front row who was crying through the whole thing and two black ladies who were crying," she says. "But the back row was older white, well-to-do looking men.

"We were thinking there was a possibility [Camp] would get more, but [the D.A.'s] office kind of conditioned us to think that he might get probation," Jason Deneke says. "Because he was a nice, clean-cut kid."

Camp took the stand the day before his punishment was to be decided.

"Do you have anything you want to say to the Deneke family, Dustin?" Clark asked him.

"I'm sorry to the Deneke family for their loss," Camp said. "It's a tragic deal that shouldn't have happened."

Prosecutor Murphy asked the jury to consider Camp's state of mind and to consider the message they would send to the community through their sentence.

"I don't think he mentioned Brian Deneke's name," Murphy said. "I just want you to think, 'Is Dustin Camp concerned about what's happening to him now? Does he really accept responsibility for what he did or does he still think that he was justified?'"

Clark asked the jury to consider a different message.

"If this really is a time for this community to come together ... and to heal these wounds and to start anew, then Dustin Camp must be given the opportunity to atone," he said. "And you don't atone in a prison cell."

Three hours later, the jury delivered Camp's punishment: 10 years probation and a \$10,000 fine, the maximum fine for manslaughter.

"It was like thunder struck," says Dave Trew. "[For] every friend I had sitting in that room, it was like someone had kicked them in the gut. We couldn't believe it—we knew it was a possibility but it was like a slap in the face. It wouldn't have been as bad if they just let him go. Instead, they convicted him and then slapped his hand."

The Deneke family and supporters met with a disappointed Murphy, Coyle and Rebecca King minutes later in a courthouse conference room, where the prosecutors tried to explain the verdict.

"We did the best job we could on legal terms," King says. "If you look at the criminal history of the person and it's the first show of violence, you're probably not going to get a good sentence. I can't tell you why it was manslaughter and not murder, when [Camp] said what he said. The Lord can see you can't second guess a jury very well."

Chris Oles asked the question that was on everybody's mind, says Trew. "He raised his hand and said, 'If this was the other way around and Brian had killed Dustin, would he have gotten probation?'"

Murphy was silent for a moment, Trew says, then he swatted Oles on the shoulder with a handful of papers, "half-heartedly" chuckled and said, "Chris, I hate you." Then, he addressed everyone.

"If this had been the other way around, one of you guys would have been in jail," the punks remember him saying. "And we're sorry but that's the way the world works."

Jessica Jackson and Jennifer Hix were at a stoplight minutes later when Jackson noticed a woman in the car next to them waving. The woman rolled down her window and asked, "Were you at the trial? What did he get?"

When Jackson told her the sentence, the woman started crying.

...

"This was a hate crime and needed to be tried as such," says attorney Jeff Blackburn. "Dustin didn't know Brian. What animated him was who he thought Brian was."

Blackburn is the Deneke family lawyer and "what people would describe as a radical," he says—he headed an Amarillo chapter of Students for a Democratic Society at 13. He had been following the case and received a call from the Camps on Monday, December 14, he says, but referred the family to Clark, rejecting the case on principle. When Mike Deneke called him five days later, he called right back.

"This situation was greater than the sum of its parts," he says. "What needed to happen was not only legal—it was social and political."

"This was a hate crime and needed to be tried as such," says attorney Jeff Blackburn. "Dustin didn't know Brian. What animated him was who he thought Brian was."



Jeff Blackburn

By Christmas Eve of 1997, Blackburn, along with his legal assistant Mary McIntyre and the Deneke family, had filed the statement of purpose for the Brian Deneke Memorial Committee. Besides fostering tolerance and discouraging violence, the Committee aimed to "actually support the victims of this crime" and "see that justice is done through the legal system."

Three months and five days into Dustin Camp's probation, Blackburn filed a civil suit against Camp and his family on behalf of the Deneke family and Chris Oles.

"The verdict reaffirmed everyone's commitment. Until then, the civil suit had just been an option," McIntyre says. "[Now] we'll finally get a chance to talk. We want to present an accurate picture of who Brian was and we want to grill [Camp and his friends]."

Warren Clark defends the scenario that he constructed—that Brian Deneke and his friends were aggressors determined to "commit aggravated assault" and "attempted murder."

"I made my case with hostile witnesses—people like Chris Oles, Jason Deneke and John King," he says. "Brian Deneke needs to bear responsibility for what happened. The idea that he was an innocent tourist who was viciously jumped by 100 white hats is a fantasy."

District Attorney King, while emphasizing that Camp still deserved the blame for Brian Deneke's death, characterized the fight as "voluntary mutual combat."

"Either side could have caused it to stop by backing off," she says. "If this was a hate crime, where did the hate start and where did it stop?"

But Blackburn says that Camp and his friends perjured themselves at the trial—"The story they told was nonsense," he says. In the civil suit, he plans to present evidence that the fight at Western Plaza was deliberately organized to ambush and not kill but "really mess up some kids that night, as an act of revenge for whatever slight had been delivered."

"This [was] a punk lynching," he says.

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When *The New York Times* reporters came to town, they took Chris Oles out to photograph him in an authentic Amarillo environment. While the photographer was setting up his shot, Oles says, a pickup truck driving by slowed and someone shouted, "You fucking losers!" The incident never made it into the article—part of the story that's not making headlines.

Oles and other punks say the media tends to present the fight at IHOP as a sort of *West Side Story* or *Outsiders* scenario, a rumble between two groups of what the *Amarillo Globe-News* called "white suburban kids" turned tragic.

nation she was "so proud" of her son Dustin for "taking care of his friends."

"I was like, 'fuck the media,'" says King, after being likened to a "thug" and described as "clobber[ing] a jock as hard as he could."

"They weren't telling the whole story," he says. "The *New York Times* guy didn't even talk to me—he was a lot more interested in talking to people that weren't there and didn't know Brian. I walked out."

Mary McIntyre says she started working to publicize what happened to Brian because the local media was ignoring the real issues.

"The whole issue [locally] is what this does to the image of Amarillo," she says. "The first step is getting past the denial. They don't express concern that people are harassed, and it continues."

"We're fighting a mentality that exists here. Everyone has friends and family here and we have gotten so much support and positive reaction from people that haven't bought into that mentality," Dave Trew says. "We're not fighting Amarillo."

Mike Deneke says he is fighting in part to preserve an accurate image of his son.

"We have not tried to whitewash anything as far as Brian [goes]," Mike Deneke says. "He had a pretty high alcohol content and he drank beer and dressed out of the mainstream, but we

"Everyone knew if they didn't say something, Brian's death would disappear. The only place you'd ever find it would be the Amarillo Public Library if you looked through the old newspapers," says Dave Trew.

photo courtesy Jacqui Balderaz



Brian Deneke

"What's not making it in is the history of violence that led up to this," says Dave Trew.

Though Camp's probation garnered banner headlines in the *Globe-News* and was recognized as one of the top local stories of the year, no one expected the calls from out-of-town reporters that followed, Trew says.

"We figured they'd do a bit somewhere and stick it in the back of a magazine," he says. "But everyone knew if they didn't say something, Brian's death would disappear. The only place you'd ever find it would be the Amarillo Public Library if you looked through the old newspapers. We didn't have any idea that when we told our story to world that it would actually get around the world."

A weekly Dallas paper and *Texas Monthly* magazine fought to be the first to break the story outside of Amarillo. Over Thanksgiving, features ran in *The New York Times*, *Dateline NBC* and National Public Radio, where Debbie Camp told the

don't try and cover up and say he was something he wasn't. We don't want a saint-like image and we don't want the image of the trial [of a] violent thug, which he wasn't either."

But some of the punks are getting tired of the way they show up on camera.

"The media doesn't know how to portray punk rockers—they know nothing about the movement," Jessica Jackson, who has multiple piercings, says. "The first thing [the 20/20 reporter] asked me was, 'Did that hurt?'"

John King and Chris Oles say they're now much more selective about which reporters they'll talk to and even Mike Deneke says sometimes, "it feels like it's enough."

"But long range, long term, if it's going to have a positive effect, you have to use the media to help people understand and see what happened and why," he says.

"As punks, we all fight [prejudice] every day and in a sad

and sick way, [the media] is just a different tool to use," Jason Deneke says. "I watched Brian fight this fight and in a way, he's still fighting it, even though he's not on earth. We're getting the message out about what happened so it doesn't happen to anyone else."

...

"I wish people wouldn't have had to hear it from 20/20—I wish there would have been some way to get this out to the punk community sooner," says Trew. "I think if they'd have known, there would have been more people coming in and offering support for the trial, support for the memorial shows."

Instead, news of Brian's death and the Camp trial barely trickled into the national punk consciousness. *Flipside* wrote a page-long piece in 1997 and a few lonely classified ads popped up later appeared afterwards, along with a plea on the Internet to come rally on the Potter County courthouse steps.

Jacqui Balderaz remembers e-mailing punks across the country two years ago and getting back "'We're sorry but we can't do anything about it' messages," she says.

"There was a lot of pessimism that this would never break," says Trew. "We'd been stepped on so long we didn't think that anyone would listen."

That night in January after 20/20 ran its piece, "A Town Without Pity," Jason Deneke, John King, Jessica Jackson, Jennifer Hix, Trew and friends burst into Blackburn's law office, the de facto headquarters of the Memorial Committee, grinning and hugging each other. They'd been watching as messages of support deluged the 20/20 web site.

"At first there were only a few, but then they just kept coming," says King. "Punk rockers are pissed off, [but then] all these people are writing in that aren't involved in any scene and don't have any idea what punk is. Everyone has wanted to help."

"My wife and I were just slackjawed that this happened and we hadn't heard about it," says Brian Cors, who makes and sells punk rock buttons and lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan. "I wanted to take action about it in the quickest sense possible."

By the next day, Cors had helped the Memorial Committee set up an Internet web ring and arranged to start producing flyers and buttons for the Committee. When the Committee's web site—www.briandeneke.org—went online two days later, it fielded about 1,000 visitors daily.

"I've got a lot of connections now that I didn't think I would have and a lot of support from different places," says Jason Deneke. "It's definitely weird, but it's also very good—it helps get the word out."

John King has started booking bands for the Unity Through Diversity summer festival, held every July in honor of Brian. The past two events, organized by Mary McIntyre, were free shows in Sam Houston Park, with an eclectic array of performers that saw punks and parents alike picnicking on the grass.

This summer's festival, scheduled for July 30, could expand to three separate stages and feature nationally prominent bands. Labels like Taang and Slap-A-Ham have also contacted King offering to organize and distribute benefit compilations.

"I've been involved in the punk scene since the early '80s and this is the worst incident of violence and discrimination against the punk community that I've ever heard of," says Slap-A-Ham's Chris Dodge. While "nothing is official," he says, proceeds from a possible compilation could go to cover costs of the civil suit.

John King wants the festival this summer to send a message and "show everyone what the punk movement is about," he says—not the naked aggression and intimidation that Warren Clark claimed, but nonviolent unity and solidarity.

"I'm into getting something changed and making a difference," he says.

"All violence will do is let it happen again," says Chris Oles. "I'd much rather people have creative ways to fight with their minds."

...

It's been two years since he killed Brian Deneke. Dustin Camp is sending a message of his own, one that his parents might not know about. It's on his answering machine.

"If you'd like to purchase hot salty nuts, please press one," he says. "If you'd like to leave a comment on my hot salty nuts, please leave a message."

Dustin Camp no longer drives his Cadillac. He has a new truck. For five months, he's had to hold a steady job, work off 800 hours of community service and take court-mandated anger management classes. He has to be at home between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

Camp's parents installed motion detector lights in their backyard that are so bright they keep the neighbors up, says Brittany Todd, who happens to live behind them. They get a lot of death threats, his mother said recently, and someone set a fire in their front yard last summer.

The Cadillac, at last report, still sat in the driveway.

John King now works at a local restaurant waiting tables. One day Justin Devore came in with his family, and King, who two years ago had bashed open his skull, served him dinner. He told Jessica Jackson that Devore was nothing but courteous—King figures he didn't recognize him.

Jessica Jackson takes care of Brian's dog Stout and brings him to the memorial shows in the park every summer. She and Jennifer Hix were eating out one night when Dustin Camp and his family walked in the door.

"It's really frustrating," Jackson says. "[But] you can't do anything."

Jacqui Balderaz worries that the Brian Deneke she used to talk to every day is being turned into someone else.

She sees how the story is gathering momentum: Montel Williams wants to fly everyone to New York, MTV Films called the Memorial Committee and the school picture she says Brian hated is on every punk web site and zine cover in the country.

"I don't want people to lose sight of everything—I want them to remember how Brian was," she says. "He really meant something to us. I want the story to be told right." ©

To contact the Brian Deneke Memorial Committee, please write POB 2531 Amarillo, TX 79105; call 806-371-8333; or visit their web site at: www.briandeneke.org



N Street Village: putting a face on homeless women

by Katherine Otto
illustration by Dustin Mertz

At Luther Place Night Shelter, a chart on the wall identifies all the legal drugs the women might have in their possession and what they are. Another poster above Shelter Director Amy Muhlbach's desk proclaims "Those with mental illness enrich our lives." Underneath is a list of famous thinkers who have had mental illnesses, ranging from Sylvia Plath to Abraham Lincoln to Ernest Hemingway. A smaller sign reads "I believe in miracles" in a child's scrawl.

Muhlbach spends her hours in the 31-bed dormitory-style living quarters. In one of the rooms, brightly colored quilts cover ten beds.

"The women each get their own cabinet," Muhlbach explains, gesturing to ten white cabinets, one next to each bed, which look as if they're straight from Ikea. "We don't allow locks on the cabinets, but you can see in some cases there are makeshift ones." T-shirts tied in complicated knots on the handles of some of the doors are laced with an urgency that speaks

volumes about the threat to personal property coming from not having a fixed residence.

In her office, Muhlbach pulls out a copy of the protocol for entering the shelter. Among these are specific rules about phone calls, personal hygiene, and substance abuse. The women must sign the guidelines upon entry to indicate that they agree to abide by the shelter's terms. There is no set time limit for women admitted into the shelter, but she says they usually stay for about four months.

This long-term care and rehabilitation is what the passage of the DC Initiative on homelessness in May, 1994 meant to accomplish through providing greater funding and programs for transitional housing and cutting back on those shelters that were just for emergencies. Unfortunately, some of the very government programs meant to curb homelessness do not provide women with the wide array of services N Street does to ensure sustainable rehabilitation.

The golden and purple pansies planted by the residents of the N Street Village are the first things you notice on the walk up 14th Street in northwest Washington. It is easy to tell when you are almost at the complex—when the bustling crowds of suburban-dwelling professionals on their way to lunch from jobs on Thomas Circle become interspersed with several women toting all of their belongings with them in carts. It's another example of DC's ironic and disturbing brand of culture clash, heightened in areas such as Thomas Circle where the gap between the very well off and the poor is glaringly pronounced—and often ignored.

Enter the services of the Village—a huge complex providing a variety of services to homeless women and women still seeking assistance in getting back on their feet. Most of the women who receive N Street's services enter the complex through Bethany Women's Day Center.

On a crisp October afternoon, four women play cards over the lunch provided by the center, while another sits by herself in a shower cap and curlers, looking on as the card players challenge one another. A combination of smiles and sneers decorate the faces of the women, fixated on a decent game of bridge. As Jeannie Brennan, Program Director of Bethany wanders by the women, one of them calls out, "You need to check on my medicine."

"I see the women here as being a very tight-knit community, like sisters in many respects. But with that sort of connection comes the same sort of rivalries as those among sisters, especially when they think someone is getting special attention from one of our staff," Brennan says. She has worked at Bethany for the past seven years.

The day center grew out of the Luther Place Night Shelter—which is also part of the N Street complex, Brennan explains. "The idea was to have a place where the women from the shelter could go during the day," she says, relating the risks of spending those daylight hours displaced when the shelter is closed.

DC government still has a long way to go in addressing the issue of homelessness, and those most likely to bear the brunt of the shortcomings seem to be women. Statistics from the annual report of the Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness maintain that the DC Initiative has been largely successful—their data indicates that in 1996, 43 percent of all homeless persons went unserved each night, whereas today that number is estimated at 19 percent. However, in the midst of all the statistics of the decline in homelessness that the Partnership cites, the usage of emergency shelter by women has risen by 2.5 percent—a disturbing fact when compared with the enormous decrease in emergency shelter usage and availability at large.

The N Street staff has their work cut out for them, as their services are needed more than ever, funding is increasingly harder to find.

"We made a conscious decision not to solicit government funding because we could lose a program or have to deal with the restrictions the government places on their programs," Brennan explains.

N Street operates outside governmental parameters for this reason, operating on grants from private foundations and contri-

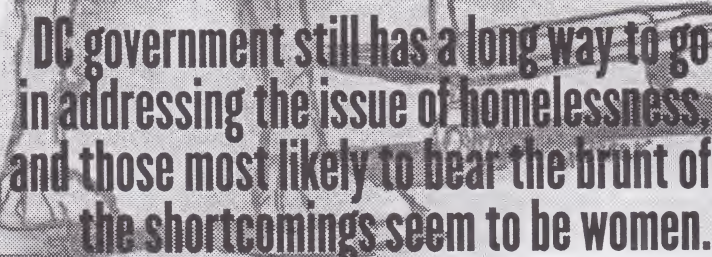
butions from individuals. Sadly, the decision to avoid DC government money is a wise one, although it means the shelter must serve a finite number of women.

"We didn't want to have a time limit on how long the women can stay, so right now the only government-funded portion of N Street is our 'shelter-plus-care' apartment in the single room occupancies," says Brennan. The few women in the shelter-plus-care apartment have "dual diagnosis"—mental illness and drug addiction, she explains.

The N Street Village has grown enormously in the past decade. When Brennan first came on board seven years ago, between 40 and 50 women ate lunch at the shelter each day, and about 60 came through for other services and case management. Now, between 80 and 100 eat lunch and between 100 and 110 come in for services.

"In a place like this, it is hard to have a clearly defined role, because we all deal with the women," Brennan explains. "Even a job description as straightforward such as 'kitchen manager' involves so much else."

In addition to the Luther Place night shelter and the Bethany Women's Day Center, N Street offers a number of other facilities to meet its ever-growing populace.



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Health services for the women of N Street are provided at the Wellness Center, a division of the complex offering screening for various STDs, free acupuncture sessions, prescriptions, and the various addiction support groups. There is a focus on promoting changes towards healthy lifestyles—the acupuncture is specifically geared towards addiction recovery (a special sort of acupuncture around the ears), and the support groups cover a variety of different kinds of addiction, from Weight Watchers to drug recovery to alcoholism and nicotine addiction.

Of course, N Street can only help those open to change. While we spoke, Brennan fielded a question from another staffer about how to handle a woman previously kicked out of Bethany for belligerent drunkenness and a lack of participation in the addiction support and recovery groups. This woman had come to Bethany that morning looking for breakfast and was turned away due to her previous behavior. N Street's policy is to turn these women away from the center until they make it obvious that they are committed to their own recovery.

"We do this in order to support the other women at the shelter who are in recovery, and also to encourage a mindset of

recovery," Brennan explains. Difficult decisions such as these must be made every day.

Sometimes N Street staff will disagree on policies and decisions. Cynthia Rosenwald has been at N Street since February working as a nurse and AIDS educator in the Wellness Center. She is currently attempting to start a women's health class at the center. She had originally hoped it could be a sexual health class, but those in the upper office weren't too excited about that idea.

"I think they were nervous because we had hoped with a sexual health class we could get into some frank discussions about safe sex with the women," Rosenwald explains. "For some of these women, these discussions are sorely needed, but some staff are concerned it might get out of hand."

Rosenwald has made a life out of women's health, learning how to take care of others by taking care of herself. It is in her demeanor as she asks visitors to her home about a muscle in their shoulder they keep grabbing or a grimace as they bend to pick something up. Her brow wrinkles in concern until she can ascertain that the maladies are manageable. An eco-feminist, she is quick to examine the implications of subtle comments and behaviors. She is the mother of three, but with elaborate tattoos, a

The staff of N Street—despite low funding, internal disputes and an apathetic public—manages to address the problem of homelessness itself but also take on its root causes.

pierced nose, and bright red, bluntly cropped hair, she doesn't look the part.

Rosenwald has thought about her position at the Center and in the world a lot. She is tough—you can tell from the way she commands attention in a room—but at the same time, she is easily approachable and compassionate, striking the tenuous balance the staff at N Street must maintain. She has dedicated her life to education and care centered on the health of women. Her work at N Street is especially challenging because of the clientele and the high demand for care, but she is used to it. Rosenwald previously worked for the DC Mobile Community Outreach Treatment team, which provides services to the mentally ill. She also worked in Whitman Walker's Day Treatment Program and for Housing for the Homeless. Her time is now divided equally between nursing and HIV education. Rosenwald remarks on the importance of extending HIV education to those women who are not actively

seeking it out. She is well versed in facilitating HIV/AIDS education workshops, and trains staff and volunteers from other shelters and service organizations in how to talk to clients so that they will be more frank in discussing HIV and AIDS.

Wearing a blue and white striped tank top and gray drawstring pants, Rosenwald pulls her knees into her chest and takes time out to remark on a recent *Washington CityPaper* article about prostitution in DC. She is appalled by the article, written from a John's point of view, which describes in detail his penchant for lower-priced hookers in the Thomas Circle area. She notes that many of the women she treats at the Center have come from lives of prostitution coupled with drug addiction. She is enraged at this story because the assertion is that the John is happy that the less expensive call girls don't require him to use protection. Rosenwald is the one that gets to see the devastating effects of this.

"These women have so many challenges, just in their day-to-day affairs," Rosenwald says. "They have to lug all of their belongings with them everywhere they go for fear that someone will rob them."

Most of the women have drug and family problems, and it is a challenge for the staff at N Street to not become overwhelmed by the startling level of need. Rosenwald thinks about more of the problems with a project such as N Street and lowers her gaze.

"There is never enough room or time for all of the women... the staff does the best it can, but it can be hard to keep staff morale up. Salaries are not competitive, and our volunteer base changes so frequently that we have no sort of continuity," she says sadly.

It is vital to the women's recovery that they feel as if they can depend on the staff and volunteers at the Center, and it is nearly impossible for them to develop relationships of any sort with the volunteers due to the high turnover.

Rosenwald is still trying to remain relevant at N Street, and still trying to enact her own vision of what radical feminism means in one's daily work. The health class she is developing is foremost in her mind at this point—she is hoping it will be valuable for the women. Her days are long—waking up as early as six in the morning to make the mile-long trek to the metro, getting home in the later hours of evening. From the earnest tone in her voice, it is evident she won't abandon her pursuit easily no matter how trying, nor will she abandon this life's labor of providing restorative services for the commonly overlooked women of N Street.

Rosenwald's mission to work around the issue of homelessness in women is brave in a city whose focus on politics has overshadowed its concern for its own people. There are a host of problems which further complicate homelessness among women, including substance addiction, partner violence, prostitution, and children the women might have with them or somewhere else. The work of the staff at N Street serves as a model for dealing with homelessness among women in a sustainable manner. The staff of N Street—despite low funding, internal disputes and an apathetic public—manages to address the problem of homelessness itself but also take on its root causes. ©



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portraits from

IRAQ

text and photos by Nicholas Arons

Not a lot is written about the 5,000 people in Iraq that die every month as a result of United Nations-imposed sanctions—even less is written about those that stay alive. These are people that amid constant bombing (while it has fallen from the headlines, the US has continued to bomb Iraq on an almost daily basis since December, 1998—the longest sustained US bombing campaign since the Viet Nam war), amid hunger, poverty and the constant specter of death have managed to keep their dignity and humanity intact.

For the last year, Nicholas Arons has helped Voices in the Wilderness lead humanitarian delegations to Iraq. In his travels into "enemy" territory, he has met many people he now considers his friends. These are stories about them. They are simple stories—some hilariously funny, others desperately sad—but they tell of lives lived in conditions so complex as to be virtually unthinkable to most of us. They offer us a rare glimpse into the lives of ordinary Iraqis—lives forever changed by the barbarous policies of the United States and the United Nations.

—Daniel Sinker

Gasim the Driver

Gasim is the "official" driver of our delegations to Iraq—or at least that is what he would like to think. He is in fact not our official driver, and we have told him this repeatedly. We simply cannot afford to pay a driver to be with us for entire days. He has taped on his windshield a white piece of paper, which bears the letterhead and mission statement of Voices in the Wilderness, indicating that he is the official driver—which, of course, he is not. He is always waiting in the lobby of our hotel, eager to take anyone anywhere that they might like to go.

He had a new car when I saw him last December. His last car was a Chevrolet. This new one is undefined. It looks as if a mechanic took 10 dead cars and put pieces from each together. The car honks incessantly and uncontrollably. When this starts to happen, usually about every five minutes, it does not stop honking for blocks. He simply throws up his hands and says, "Ahhh." He smiles, but you can tell he is embarrassed.

Gasim is a 55-year-old former engineer. He wears the same jacket and tie each day, the same sweater-vest, the same cropped-beard, and the same smile, which almost looks like a frown. His sweater-vest is torn, as is his dirty jacket, which he washes each night. When he is photographed, he does not allow his shoes to be pictured, as he is embarrassed by their condition. He has a daughter with leukemia. Her treatment is carried out in Jordan, and Gasim is perpetually in debt for this reason.

Gasim is the closest thing I have witnessed to an Iraqi "hustler." I must tell you that as I use this word I hold back a grin, since Gasim is the furthest thing from a hustler. He is a good man, who works hard to earn his living. My attempt at levity towards him is a show of respect; I could never do what Gasim does to survive and to provide for his family.

Someone asked me where they could purchase a *kafia*—traditional Arab headwear. I suggested that rather than trek down to the market, he could ask Gasim to buy him one. He did so, and Gasim ran off on the mission. He returned later that day, but parked a block away from the hotel, which was not normal for him.

He took Jeff by the arm to his car, and furtively opened his car trunk. He sold Jeff the *kafia*, and whispered something in his ear, looking very nervous. Later that day, a steady stream of Americans were taken to his car by the arm, whispered to, and handed something in a bag, for which they paid Gasim money. They would walk back to the hotel with the bag hidden within a handbag, or under their shirts. The whole transaction seemed really shady.

Curious, I asked Gasim what was in his trunk. He took me by the arm, as he did the others. He looked around, in case the police or someone else might be watching. He permitted me to peer inside his trunk, and there were about 50 *kafias* in it. He was selling them for \$5 each—they cost about 25 cents in the market.

"Gasim," he said, "find good business! Good business, ha ha ha!" he exclaimed, laughing.

The next day, Gasim came up to me. He only seeks me out when there is a problem, never when he is hatching a new scheme. I knew he was going to complain that someone short-changed him on a cab ride, or that I owed him money for something. He took me to his car. He slowly opened the trunk. I looked inside. There were about 25 unsold *kafias* left.

"Bad business, Gasim," he exclaimed, and threw his hands up in the air, "Bad business." He really did look sad.

I told him I was sorry, and that he should return the *kafias*.

He shook his head. "You turn to buy *kafia*," he said, motioning to the stack in his trunk.

I told him I still didn't want to buy a *kafia*. Then I realized he intended for me to buy all 25. I asked how much for 25. He wanted \$150 for them all. I looked at him incredulously.

"I will pay you \$20," I bargained.

Before I could finish the sentence he had unloaded them into my hands, said, "Thank you, it was good business," and was gone.

The next day, without my knowledge, Jeff asked Gasim for a map. I wish I had known he had done this, since I would have told Jeff to get his own damn map, knowing that Gasim would buy about 500. I was not shocked when two days later Gasim walked into the hotel to take me aside, looking sad and pathetic.

"Bad business," he whispered. He took me to his car. There were 15 maps of Iraq sitting there, in his trunk. He made a puppy-dog expression, and mumbled, "Bad business for maps."

I ended up purchasing fifteen maps of Iraq from Gasim.

The Shoeshine Boy

There are several shoeshine boys who occupy the space just outside our hotel, between the front door and where Gasim's car sits. They are great kids, and we usually get about 5-10 shoeshines a day from them. We do so to give them money, by requesting a "service" (I put this in quotations since I have traveled to Iraq with two new pairs of shoes, and each time, after my "shoeshine,"

photos opposite page: (top, l-r) school children at the school we bombed; Kurds at Hatra; shoeshine boys.

the shoes are ruined). If we didn't get our shoes shined with such frequency, the boys would prostitute themselves. This is not conjecture—I have seen the boys in the bushes with old men before, and will get as many shoeshines a day to ensure that they don't end up back there. It certainly would be better to help them afford school or to sponsor their families, but we are unable to do so—instead we get shoeshines.

We pay about 25 cents per shoeshine, which is a very good wage. I figure they make about 5,000 Iraqi Dinar a day from our shoes. This is equivalent to about \$2.50, which is nearly twice what the average Iraqi doctor makes each month.

One day there were some new boys there, whom I had not seen before. I imagine that they heard about the good business we provided, and decided to encroach on the younger kids' business. They were very rough with me when I tried to pay them, telling me that I had not paid enough. They were jumping on me and grabbing at my money, so I simply walked away from them.

I got about two blocks from the hotel when I noticed that my bag was opened. Missing was my wallet, passport, and Starbucks mini-mints. I almost had a heart attack, since I had \$1000 in American cash to pay for transportation around Iraq. \$1000 is far more than any Iraqi has seen in the last 10 years, especially for a shoe-shiner. I couldn't believe it. I didn't know if the wallet and passport had fallen out, or had been robbed. I figured I would never see that money again, not to mention the passport. I started retracing my steps back to the hotel, hoping I would see it on the ground. I didn't. I got back to the hotel. Where before there had been about 10 boys hustling to shine shoes, there were now none.

I had no idea what to do. I was even debating telling the police. I was about to go inside the hotel to consult the front desk when the smallest of the shoeshine boys peered at me from around the corner of the hotel. He saw me and came out. His face was scratched and cut, and his hand was bleeding.

He handed me my wallet and passport. All of the money was there. I tried to give him some money for rescuing it, but he refused. I was so happy to see my wallet back that I hadn't realized what had happened. This tiny boy had chased down the much older boys and fought them for my wallet and passport, then returned them to me without touching what was inside. I have no idea if he even realized there was \$1000 in there. Either way, I will never forget that he did that.

I never did get back the mini-mints though.

Ahmed the Physician

Ahmed was raised in England, where his dad was a professor of History. He was studying medicine in Britain when the family returned to Iraq in August 1990—just a few days before Iraq invaded Kuwait. Once this happened they could not leave, as both Ahmed and his father were trained professionals. On January 15, 1991 the Gulf War started, and Mohammed was forced to be an Army medic. Being a medic in a war in which your side loses 150,000 and the other loses 78 is not easy, especially considering that he was stationed near Basra, and the Highway of Death.

Ahmed was a resident of Britain, but for weeks Ahmed tend-

ed to patients who were missing limbs, badly burnt, partially incinerated, and emotionally demoralized. His patients had been fighting the greatest, richest, and strongest military on this earth, and Ahmed was one of the many paramedics tending to their wounds. He saw things that we will never see.

The war ended, but the sanctions against Iraq continued. This meant several things. For Ahmed, it meant that he could not leave Iraq and return to Britain. His dad managed to escape to Jordan, but when the Iraqi government found out that his father was gone, they put Ahmed under special watch. Knowing this, he had to stay. After spending time in the worst battle scenes of the Gulf War, watching countless people die, losing his dad to emigration, and being unable to leave a decimated country, Ahmed fell into a severe depression.

That was almost 10 years ago. Since then, Ahmed has continued studying medicine in Iraq. He wants to leave Iraq so he can finally take the test he needs to complete his studies and officially become an MD. He can take the test in Jordan, but he does not know when he will be allowed to go. He will only find out the day before he leaves that he has gotten clearance. As a result, he must always be ready for the exam. Every single day of his life, until the day finally arrives, Ahmed must be prepared to take the test.

But Ahmed has no access to medical textbooks. Under sanctions, medical textbooks are banned. So a medical student who must be prepared for his final exam at any moment has no access to recent developments in medicine. But even aside from professional and career development, Ahmed has a sincere and keen interest in medicine. He loves it. He loves reading. He loves books.

When he heard that our delegation had a suitcase full of medical textbooks, he asked if he could look at them. I wish you could have seen the look on his face when he saw some of the books, even though they were completely unrelated to his field of specialty.

He had a smile from cheek to cheek, and seemed so pleased that he could look at them. "My friends, I have waited for years for these books," he said. We gave him all that we could.

Ahmed would not let me in his home when I went by later that day. I couldn't understand why, since last summer I was there and welcomed inside. While he went in, I peeked through the window. His sofa and carpet were gone, as were most of the family's belongings. There were no longer chairs or even a kitchen table.

Ahmed took me aside that evening. He asked if we could take a walk. It was a cold night in Baghdad—really cold, about 45 degrees—but Ahmed was sweating profusely. His whole face was dripping as we began to walk, and I knew that he was nervous.

He said to me, "I need to ask you a favor, but I don't want to ask anything inappropriate, but if it's OK, I just want to ask, but please let me know if this is a bad question, I mean, if you feel bad about me asking you this just say so, well, the thing is, you see, and I won't ask this in a fashion that makes you feel bad to say no, and you see, the thing is, you have to know you can say no..." and he spoke like this for about 20 minutes, on and on.

I knew exactly what he wanted to ask me. But he couldn't do it. He kept prefacing everything over and over again until I couldn't take it anymore. It was painfully clear that he had never asked anyone for money before. My glasses started to hurt, and all

of the sudden I started crying in front of him. "Ahmed," I said, "how much do you need?"

He started again, "Well, you see, I don't want to ask for too much, or make you feel uncertain about why I am asking..."

He went on, until I said again, "Ahmed, I don't care, just tell me how much money you need."

He only wanted \$100.

Mohammed of the Book Market

I have much less to tell about Mohammed. I barely met him, but he is like so many people I meet in Iraq. I met Mohammed at the Friday book market, where men come to sell their family possessions. There are rows and rows of books. I stayed among these rows, not able to bear the thought of visiting the auction section where people hawk their family heirlooms—personal collection of art, Persian rugs, eyeglasses, clothing, and kitchen utensils—at ridiculously low prices.

Mohammed approached me from afar. He saw I was an American and he wanted to practice his English. He had studied to become a translator, specializing in agriculture. He studied at a university in Baghdad before the war, intending to translate for the British and Americans who came to Iraq to sell contracts for farming goods and foodstuffs—businessmen who don't come anymore.

Mohammed took me through rows and rows of books, explaining what he was doing there. He comes each week to buy a book, reads it, and then comes back the next week to exchange it for a new one. Mohammed had a library of books in English before the war. I asked where it was now, and he pointed all around us.

"They are here," he said, with a sad smile.

His daughter is dead. Before she died, he sold his books for medicine. Now he spends his Fridays looking for his old books, and buys them one at a time so he can spend one week with them, before he has to exchange it for another.

I am sure that if I told this story to a Western reporter, or US government official,

they would say that Mohammed was part of Saddam Hussein's propaganda machine. They would tell me that he was sent there to meet us, and told what to say. But I believed Mohammed. I believed Mohammed when he showed me the picture in his wallet of his daughter, and when he fought back tears when he told of the day he sold his final book.

It was Melville's *Moby Dick*.

Hassam the GMC Driver

During the Gulf War, Hassam left Baghdad for Mosul in northern Iraq, with tremendous haste and fear in the hope of avoiding the constant US bombardment. He was in Mosul the day two missiles hit a school, "one after the other," killing many of

the students inside. "Life is so sad," he says. Hassam has five kids himself. He speaks perfect English. He is a very good man.

The drives that Hassam took us on were breathtaking. We drove north from Baghdad past Samara, Tikrit, a sprinkling of cows, sheep, slums, dusty towns, ornate mosques that don't even make sense to the Western eye, mountains in the distance, refineries of oil spewing smoke, marshes, rivers all dried up, and places where the fog was so thick and the mist so heavy that all we could do was sit in the road and wait. He drove us through miles of desert in the distance, where Lawrence of Arabia walked, and Abraham, Sinbad, Jonah of Nineveh, Persians, Ali Baba, Scheherazade, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Romans, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Greeks, Turks, intellectuals, Marco Polo, Alexander the Great, Jesus, archaeologists, professors, nomads, Bedouins and tourists, once walked. All the while I thought, "I cannot believe that I am seeing this."

The hardest part about being with Hassam is that despite his intelligence—PhD in engineering—and his mastery of the English language—he took courses at Cambridge University—none of the Americans on our delegation spoke to him. They viewed him as the driver, not a man.

Hassam's kids are usually hungry and he has to spend all day with us, listening to our complaints about the bad quality of Iraqi food; complaints about the pace of life in Iraq during Ramadan; complaints about the fact that nothing works (since we have bombed the communication centers, water and sanitation plants, and electrical grid); and watching us take pictures everywhere with cameras worth enough to feed his kids for months.

It is almost as if he was invisible. Here is a proud man, who holds a degree higher than anyone in the car, who has studied at a

MOHAMMED'S DAUGHTER IS DEAD. BEFORE SHE DIED, HE SOLD HIS BOOKS FOR MEDICINE. NOW HE SPENDS HIS FRIDAYS LOOKING FOR HIS OLD BOOKS, AND BUYS THEM ONE AT A TIME SO HE CAN SPEND ONE WEEK WITH THEM, BEFORE HE HAS TO EXCHANGE IT FOR ANOTHER.



Crowd at the Friday book market.

university where none of us would ever be accepted, and we ignore him completely. We make jokes out of nervousness when we leave hospitals, and barely thank him for driving us all over the country. He is fasting for Ramadan. We eat in front of him.

After one long drive, I went up to him in private at a rest stop. I asked, "Hassam, have you ever heard of the term 'ugly American?'"

He nodded. He knew exactly what I meant.

Hatra

Hassam said to us that he would take us to some ruins. "Something old," he said with an ironic smile, knowing we didn't know enough history cumulatively to even make sense of what we were about to see.

As the sun began to set and the moon was slowly rising, we approached Hatra, the best-maintained and most historic eastern-most outpost of the Roman Empire. We were all rendered speechless when we saw this place. We walked to the middle of a field, surrounded on all sides by huge buildings dating back to 200 B.C.

We saw in the distance a black dot, slowly approaching us. As it got closer, we could see a man wearing a kafia, and an AK-47 rifle slung over his shoulder. He looked really mad. He was sprinting for us, and the drivers started getting nervous. One of the drivers said, "Maybe we go now, Nicholas." This guy was getting closer, still sprinting, his teeth together, his eyes dead on us, and the rifle in his hands. People looked at me, as if I was supposed to know what to do.

Finally, the man got within range and we stood frozen. One hand held his gun steady on his shoulder, and he extended his right hand roughly.

"Welcome," he said, "to Hatra. I am Nassim. Tour guide. At your service."

That was about the only English he knew. He was ecstatic that there were foreign visitors to his museum—the first in five years.

Gasim, again.

After 10 days of sobriety and unnecessary difficulties caused by ignorant Americans, I really needed a beer. Unfortunately, I was in Iraq during Ramadan, when it is illegal to sell alcohol. So I asked Gasim where one could procure a beer during this holy time. He said he knew and we took off.



Gasim, Iraqi "hustler."

Gasim took me to what seemed like the furthest corner of Baghdad. He parked the car and went inside to buy a can of beer. He came out with a bloody nose and no beer.

"Gasim," he said, "get no beer. No beer, ha ha ha." He was laughing, and I guessed that meant I could laugh too.

Beerless, we got back in his car. It wouldn't start. We got out and looked under the hood. Gasim flicked the starter with his finger and the car roared to life. But he had left the car in drive, so the car took off down the busy street without us in it. We took off after it. Gasim was terrified—the doors and windows were locked and his car wasn't getting any slower. He was so frightened that his car would crash into something or someone. Behind that fear was the dread of explaining to police why his car was running without him.

Two blocks later, his car still moving steadily faster, Gasim managed to pull the window down with the palms of his hands

and dive in. He dove in face-first, however, and since you can't shift into park when the car is moving, it kept going. Finally, Gasim managed to turn himself around in the car and stopped it. We had a great laugh, even though his nose was still bleeding.

With all the problems Gasim has (and causes), not to mention the terribly sad things that we saw in Iraq, I will never forget that moment, because I have never laughed so hard.

The School That We Bombed

A child starts screaming. He is sobbing, shaking, and screaming, but the scariest thing is how his entire body is convulsing uncontrollably. The teacher runs for his mother, who comes to bring him home and comfort him. His first-grade teacher later explained to us, "He saw USA come and think bombs come back again."

It never even dawned on us that maybe they didn't want us to come. We were coming to visit a school that our country had accidentally bombed, hoping to help.

The teachers feign politeness and hospitality for a few moments, but we can see that they can not contain their anger. They wanted to be heard. One starts pacing, and finally, in front of her class, she breaks down and screams, "We are all human beings. We are all human beings. Don't bomb my kids." She repeats this over and over.

Ed, one of the people on the delegation, tries to change the topic, asks a naive question: "What do you lack?"

A teacher looks at him incredulously, for all that Ed has to do was look around to realize they needed everything.

There were children's crayon pictures on the walls of Iraqi planes bombing the United States. There was one picture a child had drawn of a kid with his guts spilling out from a gunshot.

The kids were so cute. Some were scared, but many were happy to wave to our cameras, to smile, and to play games with us. We entered one class where there

were holes in the walls, and where ten days earlier, during a lesson in math, the windows had shattered and chaos reigned—the kids were running everywhere, screaming, holding each other, getting cut by glass.

One class wouldn't let us in. The kids were too scared.

One teacher told us that the kids cry when the US planes fly overhead. Many don't come to school anymore after the incident.

We examined kids' heads that had been sliced by glass. They are so young. So innocent. And they were bombed.

What would the teacher have thought if I had informed her that she and her students were quite lucky? In a show of great benevolence, the US Armed Forces are now dropping cement bombs on Iraq, to avoid "collateral damage." Had the Army not switched to cement munitions, she should be happy to know, they would have all been killed. What an army. What a country we are.

This war never ends. ©

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DAYS IN SEATTLE

A view from the streets | by Chris Dixon | photos by Dan Dean

Depends! Does anyone need some Depends?" shouted the woman holding a plastic shopping bag. Hastily, a few people scrambled over to her. "They only cost a dollar," she explained while distributing the adult diapers. Confronted with a few quizzical looks, she clarified, "You know, for lockdowns." Slowly, I understood: people who are locked together in blockades for hours at a time can't take time out for bathroom breaks. With diapers, the problem is eliminated.

It was the evening of Monday, November 29th. Around us in a crowded warehouse, activists were making last-minute preparations: they were busy assembling first aid kits; painting puppets; holding small meetings; and welding odd-looking metal fixtures. We were in what was already well-known as "420" or "the Denny Space"—the official welcome and workshop center for those of us preparing to shut down the Seattle Ministerial meetings of World Trade Organization (WTO), from November 30th to December 3rd. Formally a dance club, the building at 420 East Denny Way near downtown Seattle was well fitted to be a radical workspace. On November 20th, with \$1000 in rent, a two-week lease, and some stark redecoration, it became a hatching ground for some of the largest and most effective protests in recent US history.

How did this come to pass? Indeed, how does one go about shutting down a major international trade meeting and launching a public debate about some of the very underpinnings of contemporary capitalism? When our culture is quick to remind us that the '60s are over, that the Left is dead, and globalization is as natural as gravity, where did the incredible success in Seattle come from? Answering these questions takes us on an intense journey, one that we can best understand with a mix of tear gas, nightly meetings, and contagious exhilaration running through the streets.

A view from the streets means no safe pretense of objectivity. Instead, it means looking out from amidst the police brutality, the marches, the graffiti, and the protesters. This is my view—the view of an organizer, participant and observer of what transpired in Seattle in late November and early December of 1999. This is an attempt to document and make sense out of what happened. My hope is that along the way, we'll find some hints about the trajectory of radical social activism as we move into the 21st century.

The Road to Seattle

In January 1999, Seattle was announced as the choice for the WTO's "Millennium Round." By February, word was making its

way through international activist circles. Many in the Pacific Northwest pointed to it as an unprecedented opportunity for protest, since the Seattle Ministerial was the first international trade meeting of its kind to be held on US soil. Some of us had joined thousands of others in Vancouver, BC during November 1997 to protest the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit as it sought to "open up" trade in the global Southeast. In Seattle, we saw the possibility of the APEC protests multiplied a hundred fold.

By spring, opponents and proponents alike were speaking about "the road to Seattle." In fact, the road to Seattle had many routes. For corporate boosters like Pat Davis, president of the Washington Council on International Trade and one of original supporters for bringing the WTO to town, it was about erecting the "Seattle Host Organization," raising funds from corporate sponsors, insuring the cooperation of public officials, and orchestrating a warm welcome. Surely, this road was generously lubricated with both money and power.

For progressives, the road to Seattle was a far more difficult trek. Effective protests are rarely planned overnight; rather, they come out of patient, dedicated, and often frustrating organizing efforts. This was no different. Each activist organization faced an exhausting array of constant concerns. How can we craft coalitions without watering down our politics? How can we get the word out about what we're organizing in Seattle? How can we effectively shut down the World Trade Organization? How can we make sure that our phones get answered? These and more were all questions that plagued countless meetings. Without hundreds of thousands of dollars in corporate backing, underpaid, unpaid, and just plain tired activists had to rely on continuous grassroots educating, organizing, fundraising, and volunteer hours simply to stay afloat.

Even among progressive organizations, there were many different paths to Seattle. First and foremost, there was the People for Fair Trade/Network Opposed to the WTO (PFFT). Launched in the spring of 1999 with the assistance of Ralph Nader's organization, Public Citizen, PFFT drew together a broad umbrella of consumer advocacy groups, environmentalists, human rights activists, and many others. Coordinated by Mike Dolan, PFFT set the stage for much of what went down in the area's religious communities, on local college campuses, and on the evening news of Seattle.

A second road to Seattle was articulated by the Labor Movement, which originally coined the phrase "protest of the century" to describe its anticipated demonstrations. Speaking of Labor with a capital "L" is a little disingenuous, though, because

it wasn't entirely united—not in the months leading up to the WTO and not in the streets of Seattle. On one hand, the American Federation of Labor and other established unions simply wanted a foot in the door of the WTO. As Teamsters president James Hoffa put it, "We will have a place at the table of the WTO or we will shut it down." On the other hand, more radical unions like the Industrial Workers of the World, as well as some of the rank and file of larger unions, tied the WTO to larger, more systemic problems. For instance, steelworker John Goodman stated, "We all face the same problem, and that is corporate greed." Regardless of internal divisions, however, Labor easily mobilized the largest numbers, bringing some 30 to 40,000 people to flood the streets on Tuesday, November 30th.

Yet another route was launched at a mid-July meeting in Seattle with folks stretching from British Columbia to Portland. I was among them. Later named the Direct Action Network Against Corporate Globalization (DAN) this group started out as a loose conglomeration of peace activists, anarchists, environmentalists, international solidarity groups, and unaffiliated radicals all interested in street theater and/or direct action during the WTO. Many came from Art & Revolution collectives up and down the West Coast, known for their enthusiasm and ability to inject brilliant art into radical politics.

DAN eventually evolved into a more structured coalition, bringing together groups like the National Lawyers Guild, Rainforest Action Network, Animal Welfare Institute, and Mexico Solidarity Network, among others. The shared intent, in the words of DAN organizer David Solnit, became "to physically and creatively shut down the WTO." That is, we weren't interested in drab, routine, and largely symbolic arrests to protest the WTO; we didn't want to reform it or just "make our voices heard." We wanted to nonviolently intervene, to stop the Ministerial meetings with art and living, breathing human bodies. As events unfolded in the streets during the WTO, DAN came to wield some of the most clout.

Every activist organization encountered unique strains and difficulties, but each converged in a similar spot. Indeed, that was a distinct part of the magic and power of what happened in the streets. Of course, on the way, there were some highlights.

Escalating the Confrontation

On November 16th, twenty-seven activists walked into the WTO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland posing as students on a guided tour. Several chained themselves across the front doorway, while others dropped a banner from the roof. Meanwhile, one inside faxed a communiqué from an occupied office and another uploaded live digital video footage of the action in progress onto the web. Within two hours, all of them had been rounded up and kicked out of the building—but none of them were arrested.

The Geneva activists later wrote, "Visibly the direction of WTO didn't want to make martyrs out of people who would immediately become very popular!" For once, this was no exaggeration. For months, the WTO had been anxiously trying to control critical media coverage, which was usually sparked by international groups opposed to corporate globalization. WTO director general Mike Moore had been attempting to put a friendlier face on a largely

secret organization. Even as he arrived in Seattle, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* quoted him as saying that the WTO had come to "open the door to working families everywhere." From Geneva to Seattle, though, activists were able to use this kind of slick rhetoric to their own advantage. In a steadily escalating confrontation between the enforcers of globalization and its victims, the WTO increasingly looked like spin control that was out of control.

The Geneva action, ironically known as "Squat WTO," was intended to kick off resistance in Seattle and around the world. It did. A few days later, DAN began a nine-day Direct Action and Street Theater Convergence out of the 420 space. The purpose of the Convergence was to train activists for nonviolent direct action on the morning of November 30th, the day of Bill Clinton's planned welcome address at the WTO Ministerial. The Convergence also provided a time and a space for people to build artwork of all kinds—from giant puppets of human heads to block-printed banners and signs to choreographed dance and street theater pieces. Perhaps a couple thousand people participated in the Convergence at one time or another, a few coming from as far away as Taiwan and France. For many, the most important part was getting a grasp on the structure of the planned actions and the legal strategy for those who were arrested.

The plan for the November 30th actions was based on "affinity groups" of five to fifteen people each who would determine their own creative plans for physically blockading intersections around the Washington State Convention and Trade Center, where the WTO would be meeting. Each affinity group appointed a spokesperson that coordinated with others in nightly spokescouncil meetings and then reported back to constituents. Many affinity groups also agreed to work with each other in "clusters" which took responsibility for sets of intersections. Some clusters shouldered particularly ambitious projects. For instance, the cluster known as the "Flaming Dildos" volunteered to shut down the area next to the interstate highway running underneath the Convention Center.

The parallel legal strategy was based on the assumption that upwards of one thousand activists would be arrested on the morning of November 30th. Given such estimates, DAN recommended that those arrested use "jail solidarity" tactics to get charges lowered or dropped. Chief among these tactics was refusing to give a name when being processed. If need be, hundreds of jailed activists could also refuse to move or comply with other orders, clogging the legal system with their efforts. While people organized on the inside, the DAN legal team—coordinated by veteran activist and attorney Katya Komisarek—would apply sustained legal pressure on the outside.

By November 27th, two days before the WTO Ministerial, the tally of actions was mounting. Late-night activists had placed a fake front page on 25,000 issues of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, satirizing its coverage of the WTO. A rally on the University of Washington campus had marched the full length of a main avenue, occupying key intersections with guerrilla theater. A large squad of anti-corporate cheerleaders dressed in red mini-skirts had crashed the annual Bon Marché parade through downtown Seattle. A Critical Mass bike ride had ridden down main streets and eventually opened the doors of the Convention

Center, riding straight through. Two courageous young women had scaled a retaining wall next to Interstate 5 with a "SHUT DOWN THE WTO" banner while one of their mothers shouted words of encouragement. Just by the looks of it, the WTO was in for a public relations nightmare.

On November 28, in the largest procession yet in the week, over one thousand people paraded through Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood. Throughout, there were clowns, stiltwalkers, giant puppets, marching bands, "radikal cheerleaders," and anarchist dance troupes. Even the steelworkers who led the march carried colorful, hand-painted pictures of snakes overlaid by the words "DON'T TRADE ON ME."

Meanwhile, in the surrounding blocks, police on horseback prepared for riot control and an armored personnel carrier sped by. Although no major confrontations happened, the pieces for the WTO were clearly in place: masses of exuberant protesters and a fully militarized police force.

November 29th: The Beginning

Monday, November 29th was the unofficial beginning to the WTO Ministerial, although no actual meetings occurred. Instead, delegates began settling into town and the WTO invited "accredited" non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to a daylong symposium. Later, the Seattle Host Organization treated WTO delegates to an opening reception and gala.

If the WTO was trying to be low-key, activists weren't. The night before, over 75 squatters had occupied an abandoned building just one block from the downtown police station. As one squatter, Cat, explained to a journalist, "This form of nonviolent direct action is not about just saying No! It is about saying Yes! and creating a real alternative. We are turning this into activist housing during the WTO and hope to keep it as housing for the homeless once we are gone." Indeed, the activists were able to hold the building until the end of the WTO.

In the streets, 240 animal rights activists and environmentalists costumed themselves as sea turtles, which are protected under the US Endangered Species Act—which the WTO has all but voided as an unfair inhibitor to trade. Originally part of a Sierra Club march, they and nearly 2,000 others roamed downtown, eventually stopping to join French farmer Jose Bove in a protest of McDonalds. Bove, famous for bulldozing a McDonalds under construction in France, spoke about the importance of family farms in sight of two black-masked protesters climbing on top of a bus with a "VEGAN RESISTANCE" banner. The day was full of such juxtapositions.

November 30th: "Shut it Down!"

Tuesday, November 30th, known internationally as "N30," was a day of competing images in Seattle. On one hand, there was

the power and diversity of countless people taking over the streets. On the other, there was the tear gas, rubber bullets, pepper spray, and brute force of the Seattle police. And somewhere in it all there were a few broken windows.

As I walked to downtown at 6 AM on Tuesday, actions were already underway. Workers were calling in sick, students weren't going to school, and some affinity groups were secretly setting up their blockades. Even cab drivers engaged in a work stoppage.

By 7:30 AM, thousands of protestors had gathered. In the drizzly early-morning dawn, there was more brilliant color in the



IN THE DRIZZLY EARLY-MORNING DAWN, THERE WAS MORE BRILLIANT COLOR IN THE CROWDS THAN IN THE ENTIRE DRAB CITYSCAPE THAT SURROUNDED US.

crowds than in the entire drab cityscape that surrounded us. Looking around, there was a group of activist Santa Clauses; many returning sea turtles; a sprinkling of expert stilt-walkers; a jubilant squad of radikal cheerleaders; an indescribable number of puppets; an anarchist marching band, complete with matching pink gas masks; and hordes of regular-looking folks, ranging from steelworkers to yuppies. And then they started marching.

As the processions neared police lines around the Convention Center, some affinity groups deployed blockades while others were already in progress. By the time marchers had circled the nearly twenty-block circumference, every single intersection, alleyway, and hotel entrance was blocked by nonviolent protesters. Some simply sat across roads with arms linked. Others locked their arms inside pieces of pipe known as "lockboxes," creating an impervious human wall. Still others used a combination of U-locks and bike cables to chain their necks together. The most unique blockade was created by a cluster that was carried in a large wooden platform underpinned by metal pipes. Once set down in an intersection, activists locked their arms into each of the pipes while others sat in a circle around them.

Confronted with these immobile human blockades and their supporters, the police were visibly tense. Interestingly, Bill Clinton had canceled his welcome address a few days before. Of course, events were still scheduled for WTO delegates. Yet, as mid-morning approached, they were unable to make it into the Convention Center. Some stopped to speak with protesters. Others simply tried to push their way through.

By 10 AM, the police were preparing to create a corridor for "safe entry." They choose an intersection with a fairly simple blockade, gave a quick warning, lobbed in some tear gas canisters,



THIS WASN'T THE REGULAR TEAR GAS THAT WE HAD GROWN USED TO THE DAY BEFORE, EITHER—THE POLICE HAD SWITCHED TO "MILITARY-GRADE."

and shot a volley of rubber bullets. The few protesters who remained were dragged away and arrested, many of them pepper-sprayed in the process. At a few other intersections, police resorted to more blunt force, beating nonviolent activists with two-foot long batons in order to motivate them to move.

Despite police efforts, the WTO was effectively shut down. Indeed, as Assistant Police Chief Ed Joiner would later flatly admit, "The police strategy failed." Word quickly made its way through the crowds that the morning session had been canceled—the only people inside the Convention Center were the press. The following day, the *Seattle Times* would report that, throughout Tuesday morning, "US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and US Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky were holed up in the Westin Hotel. Federal law-enforcement officials said the streets of Seattle were too dangerous for them to travel the few blocks to the opening ceremonies."

Around 11 AM, crowds of protesters swelled with the arrival of the People's Assembly march as well as student walkout marches from nearby colleges and high schools. Some newspapers estimate that, by that point, roughly 10,000 people had the Convention Center surrounded. Although police continued to shoot cans of

tear gas and steady streams of rubber bullets, most locked-down activists began to relax. We were obviously winning.

While we were holding the intersections, between 30,000 and 40,000 workers were gathering for a labor rally and march at Memorial Stadium. As one organizer, Lucilene Whitesell, would later point out, this was "an unprecedented number." They weren't supporting strikers on a picket line, they were out on the streets showing international solidarity with workers everywhere. By early afternoon, they were heading down Pine Street, in sight of many of the blockades. Labor's unity dissolved in the face of confrontation, though—some

workers marched on, away from police lines, while others rushed over to join the thousands already sitting or standing in the roads.

As the day drew on, confrontation between police and protesters intensified. Those of us near major blockades became more and more used to the burning sensation of tear gas, and a few angry protesters began throwing the canisters back. Along with many others, I was hit with rubber bullets while retreating from an intersection. A couple of blocks away, several young men set the contents of an overturned dumpster on fire after the police chased them down the street. Meanwhile, office workers and shoppers scrambled to get past the looming clouds of tear gas, many of them pausing to have their eyes flushed by DAN medics. Throughout, crowds frequently chanted "Nonviolence!" or displayed the two-fingered peace symbol.

Months before, DAN and affiliated organizations had all agreed to a set of nonviolence guidelines that prohibited violence—physical or verbal and property destruction

for the duration of the Tuesday action. However, not everyone in the streets had agreed to abide by them. Since mid-morning, small bands of black-masked anarchists had been carefully busting windows at select corporate targets, including Nike, the Gap, and Bank of America. Using what they called "black bloc" formations, they stuck together and avoided police confrontations. By the afternoon, though, their targeted property damage and sometimes delightful graffiti had gone to the wayside as a handful of random protesters took over. Even the graffiti degenerated. For instance, the spray-painted phrase "FUCK WTO BITCHES" showed up across from NikeTown.

It's important not to exaggerate, however. For the most part, property destruction was fairly localized. Many media reports described Seattle as a city devastated when, in reality, mainly corporate stores in the heart of downtown suffered damage. And in truth, only a few people actually engaged in substantial property damage. Mike Dolan of PFFT would later describe the feelings of many: "We came not to trash Seattle, but to show the trashy reputation of the World Trade Organization."

By this time, the police were clearly agitated. That evening, Seattle Mayor Paul Schell declared a "civil emergency," and set a

curfew from 7 PM to 7:30 AM in the downtown area. As some people who weren't even protesting the WTO began breaking windows and looting, many activists began to discuss leaving. Those who hadn't been arrested saw that they could come back for another day of blockades on Wednesday.

Just as the largest blockade was calmly preparing to leave, the police opened fire with tear gas and rubber bullets. In addition, they added a new weapon: concussion grenades—small projectiles that hit the ground with a bright, booming explosion. In the face of this attack, scared protesters stampeded and splintered, many heading out of downtown. Several dozen fled toward the Independent Media Center, a small storefront resource for alternative journalists, only to be chased, sprayed with liquid tear gas, and then blockaded inside.

By the end of Tuesday, 68 people were in jail and many others had suffered the consequences of police repression. The DAN welcome center was turned into an emergency clinic for protesters with severe pepper spray burns and dangerous cases of tear gas inhalation. For all of it, though, we had successfully shut down the WTO. The *Seattle Times* quoted one of the last WTO delegates to leave on Tuesday afternoon as saying "That's one for the bad guys."

December 1st: Crackdown

Wednesday morning greeted Seattle with protesters marching into downtown once again. This time, however, riot police who demanded that they separate into those who wanted to be arrested and those who didn't quickly intercepted them. Then, all of them, "arrestables" and "non-arrestables" alike, were dragged onto buses and taken away to be processed.

With the help of some 400 National Guard troops, Mayor Schell ordered the police to occupy a sometimes 25, sometimes 50-block area of downtown with the Convention Center right in the middle. Entering that area without a "legitimate reason" (i.e., being a WTO delegate, law enforcement officer, resident, or office worker), became punishable by fines and jail time. In short, Schell had created a "protest-free zone." Civil libertarians angrily called it a "constitution-free zone." At every opportunity, Schell enthusiastically reminded reporters and onlookers of his activist roots protesting the Vietnam War. In the same breath, he declared it illegal to sell or be in possession of a gas mask, essentially signing a death sentence for asthmatic protesters.

The full weight of Schell's declarations wasn't apparent until late that afternoon. As countless individual protesters were turned away from downtown by riot police, some 2,000 gathered outside of the protest-free zone for a short march and rally with the steelworkers. Most of us assumed that as long as we stayed with law-abiding union folks, we wouldn't be attacked by the police.

We were hardly a threatening bunch, mainly made up of older union activists, students, and even parents with their kids. Yet, over two blocks from the no protest zone, we were assaulted by a mob of police who tossed in multiple tear gas canisters and concussion grenades without warning. This wasn't the regular tear gas that we had grown used to the day before, either—the police had switched to "military-grade."

The results were obvious. The march scattered into several groups of a couple hundred each. Many older people collapsed;

one man went into shock; a young woman passed out, landing on her face and fracturing her jaw in three places; an older woman was hit in the face with a rubber bullet and was temporarily blinded in one eye. The lines between protesters and downtown shoppers blurred as everyone tried to escape.

Still, the police relentlessly chased the scattered groups of protesters. At Seattle's famous Pike Place Market, some activists sat down to try to de-escalate the situation. Nearby, police reacted by pepper-spraying medics, shoppers, and marchers alike. One particularly panicky officer pointed a rubber bullet gun directly at a protester's head, less than five feet away.

The police were no longer holding anything back. The following day, Kirk Murphy, a physician who treated many of the worst casualties, described police actions candidly: "What I have seen yesterday is the behavior consistent with someone who is insane."

The insanity continued into the evening when, for the second night in a row, police pursued protesters into Capitol Hill. Helicopters with searchlights circled overhead while sirens screamed late into the night, punctuated by the regular sounds of tear gas shots. This time, though, residents were even more furious at the military-like invasion, shouting at police to leave their neighborhood. A County Councilmember even came out to try to ease the confrontation. In the end, everyone, residents, protesters, idle onlookers, and even the Councilmember, were tear-gassed.

On the other side of town, at Sand Point Naval Base—which one jailed protester, Hank Tallman, would later characterize as "bondage summer camp"—seven busloads of arrested protesters refused to get off to be processed. Going for over thirteen hours without food, water, or bathroom facilities, they demanded to see their lawyers from the DAN legal team. By the middle of the night, they had all been carried off. Activist Jamie Ehrke would later tell how most arrestees remained undaunted, singing as they had learned in legal trainings: "I am going to remain silent/uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh/I want to see a lawyer/oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah."

By the close of the day, the score was clear: if we had won on Tuesday, the police had won on Wednesday. However, they had lost in the eyes of the media and, more importantly, the residents of Seattle. As I walked out of downtown that evening, people were gathered in bars and cafes watching live footage on TV of riot police firing tear gas and rubber bullets into protesters. Standing outside of one storefront, I overheard some downtown office workers talking about the "craziness" of Schell's declarations. Meanwhile, many shopkeepers had put up signs in their windows, like "WTO, GO HOME" or "We support peaceful protesters."

December 2nd: "This is what democracy looks like!"

Thursday, December 2nd was notably lighter than previous days. Perhaps it was because the police, obviously concerned about their public image, kept a lower profile.

Activists continued to persevere. Starting from Capitol Hill, over two thousand people marched toward downtown. It was, by far, the most colorful procession since Tuesday morning. Marchers carried signs, flags, banners, towering skeleton puppets, and a giant human head flanked by two large hands. Like many of the protesters, the human head was gagged in order to symbolize the effects of

Mayor Schell's declarations. Offering further comment, one marcher's sign read: "THIS IS A FREE PROTEST ZONE."

As I caught up with the march, a song wafted through the crowd: "We have come too far/We won't turn around/We'll flood the streets with justice/We are freedom bound." In counterpoint, others chanted, "This is what democracy looks like!" Together, the song and chant provided an aural backdrop which reinforced our collective sense of power.

Along the way, motorcycle police directed traffic as we flashed peace signs at them. At one intersection, a protester pointedly asked, "This is way more fun, isn't it?" Almost unconsciously, an officer responded, "Uh-huh."

Following the rally, marchers split into two processions: one heading to protest at multinational agribusiness company Cargill, and another aiming toward major WTO sponsor and timber corporation Weyerhaeuser. The vast majority followed the latter, briefly stopping at Weyerhaeuser's Seattle headquarters to hang banners and shout some chants, and then moving to the county jail, where many of nearly 500 arrested protesters were being held.

As we arrived, riot police blocked off the nearby freeway entrance. But our focus was on the people. Someone held a handwritten cardboard sign that read "FREE THE SEATTLE 500, JAIL THE FORTUNE 500." We could see prisoners pressed up against cell windows. Outside, we began to hold hands to encircle the building. Others gathered near the front and we soon heard that an affinity group had physically blockaded the main entrance. Tension was mounting, with many of us preparing for tear gas. Fortunately, the police maintained only a light presence.

Within an hour, the blockading affinity group announced their demands: unconditional freedom for all nonviolent protesters and a public apology from the city of Seattle. Those of us who were willing to risk arrest began joining the others at the entrance, overflowing into the sidewalk and onto the street. Still, the police stayed to the periphery. We appeared to be in a protracted standoff, and patiently we waited.

As the sun set, a representative from the DAN legal team announced that they had been negotiating with city officials who had granted a concession: if we ended the blockade, they would allow pairs of DAN lawyers and paralegals (in other words, organizers) to consult with groups of jailed protesters. Many present grumbled, saying that the city was only allowing prisoners the rights already owed to them. The affinity group that had sparked the action, however, urged us to exit the blockade with them. And slowly but surely, protesters began to march home.

December 3rd: Success

By Friday, most WTO protesters were dragging. After a week of running from riot police, inhaling tear gas, and enduring constant sleep deprivation, many were looking for a sense of closure as well as more news about the 500 still in jail.

As a final mass action for the week, the County Labor Council organized a rally and march from the local labor temple. Altogether, several thousand people wound their way through downtown with shouts of encouragement from construction workers, motorists, and other people passing by.

At the conclusion of the march, a large group of protesters, now including many Seattle residents who were pissed off at Mayor Schell's declarations, turned back toward downtown. As the spontaneous march approached police lines, minor confrontations erupted, and protesters argued about whether we should focus on the WTO or those who were in jail. In the end, there was no resolution, with the march breaking in half, one group going to the jail, the other half remaining in sight of the Convention Center.

Once at the jail, several hundred gathered to try to sort out what we could do for those still inside. To chants of "let them go," DAN legal team coordinator Katya Komisarek reported that many arrested protesters were being brutalized and separated from each other. In addition, some weren't getting the food and medical treatment that they needed.

From there, the rest of the day was an exercise in direct democracy as protester Skip Spitzer volunteered to facilitate a group meeting. Twenty-three people presented proposals for how best we could force the city to negotiate with our legal team. Within two hours, we had a plan to occupy the main entrance of the jail until all the protesters were released. From there, we began making preparations for a long stay into the bone-chilling night.

Just as we were making our decisions at the jail, the other half of our march had chosen to blockade the Westin Hotel, where many WTO delegates were staying. An affinity group of eight people unlocked themselves to the main entrances while hundreds of others occupied the road and sidewalk in front. Police kept their distance.

As both groups hunkered down, news leaked from the Convention Center that the WTO Ministerial had ended with no agreement on a new round of meetings. The next day, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer's* bold headline put it tersely: "Summit ends in failure." Our efforts had contributed, some delegates would later admit, by costing the Ministerial nearly two full days of meeting time.

Drawing Conclusions: What if We Could Win?

During the massive occupation of downtown on November 30, a frequent theme in graffiti was "WE ARE WINNING—DON'T FORGET." By this point, such statements were hardly an exaggeration. Yet 24 hours earlier, as activists were passing out Depends and making final preparations, very few were considering what it would mean to actually succeed. Like many, I assumed that the police would clear out the blockades with mass arrests on Tuesday morning and we would spend the rest of the week trying to get protesters out of jail. For weeks, activists and media alike had been predicting that we were in for another Chicago '68, when demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention had been brutally beaten down by riot police. Interestingly, another activist would later relate to me a casual conversation that she had with Tom Hayden, one of the organizers of the Chicago protests, during the WTO Ministerial. When she asked about the frequent comparison, Hayden pointed out that the difference was that we had shut the WTO down.

Perhaps, then, the Left isn't dead. Maybe we have more power than we realized before. And perhaps what will become known as "Seattle '99" is a harbinger of more to come. In that case, Tuesday's encouraging graffiti was an important reminder. However, it also single-handedly demonstrates the irony of the

actual victory in Seattle combined with the very real divisions that erupted among activists concerning questions of tactics and violence. Even as marchers chanted in unison, we weren't fully together. Police, reporters, and some protesters characterized Tuesday's bout of property destruction as "violence."

Certainly, there was a lot more to what happened in Seattle than the property damage. Indeed, in all of the hype, we can easily lose sight of what really transpired. Rice Mikhail-Baker Yeboah, a student activist at the University of Washington, had announced a week prior to the WTO, "This revolution will be fought not with weapons but with art." Although largely unmentioned in media accounts, this was perhaps the more radical and innovative aspect of the WTO protests. Using puppets, street theater, colorful banners, and, yes, graffiti, activists were able to coherently articulate complex messages throughout the streets of Seattle.

Despite some divisions, we also cannot afford to gloss over the mutual support that the WTO inspired among activists. As Han Shan of the Ruckus Society, an organization that trains protesters in nonviolent direct action skills, explained, "Alliances are being formed like we've never seen before." One visual example was an early procession where radical environmentalists holding cardboard trees which read "WTO Trading Away Our Forests," was led in singing "Solidarity Forever" by steelworkers. Another happened on the night of December 3rd as Teamsters served up coffee and snacks to hundreds of protesters occupying the county jail.

Certainly, some alliances weren't as outstanding. In particular, for all that DAN was able to accomplish throughout the week, we were still severely limited by our largely white, middle-class base. Despite some efforts to the contrary, covert racism, in particular, plagued the organization—as many people of color had been pointing out for months. I suspect it was similar for PFFT. If global movements against corporate globalization are to continue to grow, then we'll have to confront those kinds of limitations head-on.

In the end though, despite of our limitations, coalitions were fortunately broad enough to represent a substantial cross section of the US, and to some extent, the world. By the middle of the Ministerial, with no irony, sarcasm, or bravado, Han Shan could easily declare, "This is not a lefty, easily marginalized protest. This is a citizen's uprising."

Even people in power had to take notice. For example, Bill Clinton, the champion of "free trade" had to alter his rhetoric: "This whole process is being democratized, and we're going to have to build a new consensus that goes down deeper into every society about what kind of trade policy we want." Unfortunately

for Clinton, most of us saw right through his disingenuous tone. We knew that we wouldn't likely be part of his "new consensus." But his gesture assured us that we were having an impact.

Since then, a common theme has emerged in conversations that I have had with other activists: hope. Many young folks admit that Seattle has forever changed how they think about the possibilities for fundamental social change and mass action. Meanwhile, older activists describe a renewed sense of commitment and energy. Some had waited for decades to feel the sense



DURING THE MASSIVE OCCUPATION OF DOWNTOWN ON NOVEMBER 30, A FREQUENT THEME IN GRAFFITI WAS "WE ARE WINNING—DON'T FORGET."

of inspiration that Seattle brought. I even heard that more than a few marched for the first time since the early '70s, when the anti-war movement crumbled. This would all indicate the growth of a new Left, composed of elements of both past and present progressive movements moving together into the 21st century.

No doubt, discussions will ensue about the direction of this burgeoning coalition. In fact, they already have. Some people are proposing further international days of action like November 30th. Others have returned to their communities with new urgency and direction. Bay Area activist and perennial punk Chris Crass offers the insight that what happened in Seattle "was made possible because of all of the organizing that we do day-to-day, the often unglamorous work that makes social change happen." Ultimately, if we are to continue, there will be plenty more unglamorous work to do, too. From now on, though, we carry the spirit of Seattle '99 with us. No longer do we have to wonder *if* we can win. The question now is *how*? ©

Chris Dixon (chrisak@tao.ca) is a writer and activist recently relocated to Anchorage, Alaska. He wishes to thank many unnamed activists as well as the Independent Media Center for their invaluable (and often unknowing) help in documenting the WTO protests in Seattle.

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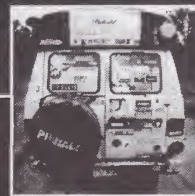
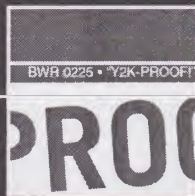
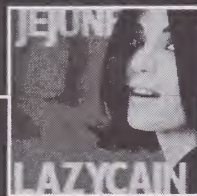
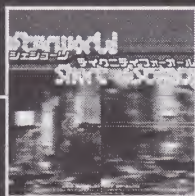
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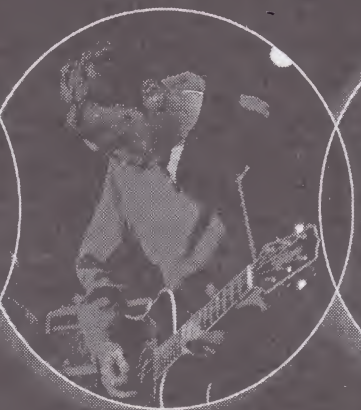
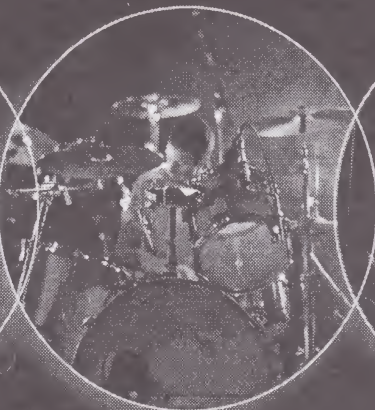
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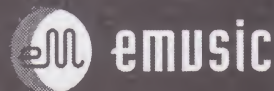
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Burn

by Christine Gilbert

She remained in the bed watching him get ready. His sleek body glistened after the shower, and she could smell his aftershave lingering throughout the room as he readied himself for work. She did not need to get out of bed just yet; her day would not start until later.

Like the song says, she had to find her toolbox. She had a mission today.

He walked over and kissed her goodbye. No passion, no tenderness. Just an acknowledgment that she had slept next to him that night. She heard the door shut behind him as he left.

She lit a cigarette, and watched the smoke rise about her head. It danced across the room in between the streams of sunlight coming in through the half-open blinds. The cat jumped on the bed, kneading the blankets with its paws and purring in contentment at finding a warm spot. She thought about curling up with the cat and sleeping the morning away, but the mission called to her.

Two months ago she realized her husband was having an affair—at least in her eyes. She remembered the feelings of betrayal, the confrontation that followed, and their inability to speak of anything else for several weeks. She had yet to forgive him for the affair; in fact, she knew that she never would.

Today was the day that she would end his relationship with the other girls. Those meaningless fluff bunnies who had disrupted her life. Sharing her mate was not what she intended nor did she intend to continue.

He had always found it easy to find new girlfriends. He simply walked down to the magazine shop on the corner and purchased the latest edition of whatever magazine displayed the most attractive woman. He would imagine living with them, and

for several days, enjoy his fantasy until he bored, and eventually found himself making another purchase. When she found the magazines, she remembered how he admitted that this was important to his well-being, his only justification for his habits of infidelity with these other women.

His words "I will not give them up" remained as subtle ghosts in her head, repeating as a haunting moan each time she looked at him.

Looking in the closet, she found his old camouflage clothes from his army days. She put them on, taking care to buff his boots before admiring herself in the mirror. Despite the large size on her frame, war required the appropriate look. Already her face expressed her determination.

She fed the cat, and locked him in the kitchen.

From his study, she gathered the magazines. The women in their seductive positions, exposing themselves for more than just the camera, their round bottoms high in the air, their high-heeled feet and exaggerated long legs dancing across each frame. There were photographs buried deep inside his desk drawer. She gathered these, looking at each shapely blonde and innocent Asian, and wished he saw her as beautiful. She saw several computer disks unmarked next to his PC. She took those too, knowing that he had spent many late nights surfing the Internet, and assumed that his favorites would be saved for future dreams. As an afterthought, she gathered his CPU as well. It took several trips to the garage to carry the collection to their grave. Glancing at the covers as she stacked the magazines inside a barrel, she barely noticed the smoldering anger rising from her stomach.

She opened the garage door. The cold breeze of the morning touched her face.

Carefully, as if not to waste a drop, she poured her husband's last three bottles of Jack Daniels into the barrel—the smell of sour whiskey and wet paper crept into her consciousness. Jack was also a consistent late night companion of her love, one for which her patience had also gone dry. The bottles joined the illicit collection. She lit a match, and dropped it into the debris. She watched as the fire consumed its morning meal.

She wondered if she would had felt better, knowing that his affairs were with women that she would never confront. Her friends told her about catching their husbands; about their jealousies and divorces. They spoke of their anger and betrayal, and several spoke of revenge by seeking younger or richer sins. Revenge should never be as simple as the seeking of flesh; it involves deeper cuts into the hearts of its victims. The smoke slowly rose from the barrel. The paper wrinkled in the heat, the bright colored pages becoming black carbon ashes to blow away with the breeze.

She turned to enter the house when a scream jolted her brain.

Turning back toward the barrel, the assault began. A blonde stepped out from the barrel, her Betty Page bikini barely covering the parts that men desired most. The Amazon carried a spear and shield, and moved to attack her aggressor.

Lisa had to dive to the floor to avoid the thrust of the spear. Crawling, she made it to the workbench, where she grabbed a crescent wrench and turned to meet her opponent. The Amazon stopped. She laughed, her voice penetrating Lisa's head in an irritating, chilly way. How puny Lisa must have seemed facing this giant attacker. As the two women stood and looked at one another, the

Amazon continued to laugh. Then she lunged at Lisa.

Lisa dodged the spear, and heard its impact into the bench. She turned, and swung the wrench into the direction of the Amazon, and watched as it moved through the smoke where the Amazon had once been.

She stood there, waiting for her hallucination to return.

The smoke was getting thick in the garage, despite the open door and the cool breeze. Lisa started toward the door of the house again, only to see from the corner of her eye, a regal black queen stepping from the barrel.

The queen looked around the garage, her eyes blazing with hostility toward the indignation of her eminent demise. Her small breasts swelled as she breathed in the fumes of her tribunal, her long legs moving toward Lisa with her hands outstretched, long fingernail-like talons eager to find flesh.

Lisa quickly found herself backed up against the wall as the queen rapidly moved toward her. She drew back the crescent wrench. As the queen drew closer, she slowly started to evaporate back into the smoke. Her flowing cape moved into the smoke, a whirling of blue mixed within the black. As she deteriorated, Lisa could feel the brush of her long claws against her cheek as they too slowly were absorbed back into the smoke.

Lisa dropped the wrench and slid to the ground. She looked at the smoke pouring from the barrel. She could see the shapes of women forming and evaporating as the smoke and flames continued. Women with long hair covering their breasts, small and round, appearing like balloons, only to pop as the flames crackled and burned. Legs appearing and

bending like tree limbs in a hurricane only to find their boughs broken when the wind pushed the smoke out of the garage. Hourglass figures, arms reaching toward lovers unknown, bright white teeth flashing amongst the red and orange sparks.

Lisa watched as a phoenix rose from the barrel.

The geisha appeared with her long kimono draping into the flames, her white face more ashen than the smoke that swirled around it. As she grew from the fire, Lisa watched the red dragons flash as they materialized and flew into the smoke. She stood, using the wall for support as the geisha held her delicate hands above her head, and started to slowly float away from the flames.

"I am his favorite" the geisha said. "He spends hours with me, talking with me, sharing his day. He enjoys my massages and loves my songs. I am his delicate flower. I dreamed of the day that I could join him, of feeding him tender dumplings cooked by my own hand, and smile at him in the mornings when he awakened. He wished that you could be me, tender and caring, gentle and needy. You know nothing of how to be desirable to a man; I have been trained in this art, and spent my life seeking to fulfill it."

Lisa stared at this young maiden with her ornamental hair pieces jangling. The geisha floated, her small white socked feet barely moving outside of the swish of her dress. Lisa could smell her jasmine perfume mingled within the death and ashes.

"He is my husband." Lisa told the Japanese flower. "Don't you care?"

"If you cared," the geisha looked into Lisa's eyes, "you would have been more available to what he needed."

Lisa longed for the hunting knife that

was near the workbench, wishing to slash the heart of the woman who had destroyed hers. But with patience, the flames would consume this gentle lotus as well as her husband's heart.

"Your husband made me real. That is all that we desire. That moment, the moment when a man would desire us above what he loves more in this life." The geisha moved across the room like she was dancing to a song.

"You mean, me? His wife? The woman that he married, swearing to love until death do us part?" Lisa asked the maiden.

"No," she answered in a soft voice. "I mean himself."

The geisha slowly dissolved into the smoke. The dragons swirled within her kimono and vanished into the breeze. She held out her hands to Lisa.

"I ask you not to forgive me, but to understand that it was only both of our dreams to enjoy life together."

Then she, as with all of the others, evaporated into the gray ash.

Lisa stood against the wall until the last wisps of smoke left the barrel. She stood there drained, hearing the words of the geisha swirling in her brain like the dragons that flew about her. She thought about her husband at work, chained to his computer, dreaming of his little flower waiting for him at home.

She took the ashes of magazines and photographs, and emptied them into a garbage can for collection later that day. The memories of the women lingered on her mind, but faded as her actions extinguished their forms to nothing more than to a lifeless gray mass, removed from her own reality and soon to be removed from her house.

She returned to her kitchen to let the cat out, and begin to pack her bags. ☺

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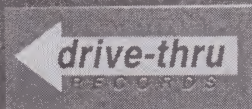


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Make Your Own Soap!

By Searah Deysach and Dawne Moon

OK let's face it: Even crusty punks gotta wash once in a while, and as long as you're gonna bathe, you might as well do it with yummy, lovely soap you made yourself. Making soap is super easy and a fab way to spend a cold day inside. Besides, after people comment on how crazy you are for making something that is readily available at the grocery store, they will be impressed that you actually know how to make your own soap and that you made it so well. We became addicts after our first time and spend lots of weekends making bar after bar of soap that we force upon our friends at every possible occasion. The best part about making soap yourself is that you can get crazy with the fragrances and have the best fucking smelling soap ever. Just remember that it takes weeks to cure, so you should plan ahead if you are going to give the soap away or use it on a special occasion (like a holiday, birthday, high school graduation or Skinny Puppy show).

People have made soap forever by what's known as the "cold process" method. When you make soap this way, you mix a fat (oil) with a base (lye). The acid from the fat combines with the base and you produce a nice glycerin soap that's good for your skin. When big industrial soapmakers manufacture soap, they use a "constant process" method. Using their system, the ingredients go in the top of a vat and the soap comes out of the bottom leaving all the glycerin floating at the top. Without the lovely glycerin, this mass-produced soap can be harsh and drying on your tender skin. Homemade soap is not only better for your skin, it's also cheap and fun to make!

Soap is usually made with coconut and/or palm oil. This makes a nice, hard, long-lasting bar with a rich lather. But you may have a hard time finding coconut or palm oil in your local stores, so we have provided a good recipe with ingredients you can easily obtain. However, you can always order these harder-to-find oils on the web and get some great recipes there as well (we've provided a handy list of soapmaking links at the end of this article).

Making Your Soap

Recipes for soap usually are done by weight, so if you really want to do this right, it is a good idea that you get a scale. However you can get a liquid weight conversion table at <http://www.silverlink.net/~timer/soapinfo.html>. But for this recipe, we've done the math for you. Remember one cup = 8oz.

INGREDIENTS:

- 14 oz tepid water
- 5.5 oz lye (like Red Devil- available at hardware stores)

38 oz Olive oil (believe it or not, cheaper olive oil is better—the soap will smell less like olives)

2-4 oz Essential Oils (see ideas for scents after the recipe)

EQUIPMENT:

Many resources say that once you've used equipment for making soap, you should never use it for making food again, but we can't afford two of everything, so we *do* use most of our soap equipment for cooking as well. The only items that we never use for food again are the wooden spoons and the lye container (don't ever use the lye container for anything but containing lye). Everything thing else should be fine for food use provide you clean it *super* thoroughly before you use it again—you want to make sure you never have the chance to ingest lye.

A large (2 Quart or larger) pot for melting/heating oil
2 wooden or plastic spoons

A heat-proof (like Pyrex or ceramic) container to mix your lye/water solution in (**you should never use this container for anything else**—we got a bowl from a thrift store)

A sturdy, straight-sided box lined with freezer paper (or plastic wrap) for a mold (a shoe box would be a good size—the larger the box, the flatter the soap)

1 or 2 candy thermometers (you can buy these at the grocery store)

Measuring cups
Rubber gloves
Dust mask
Goggles

Stick blender (this helps the soap to set up quicker, but isn't necessary. You can find them sometimes at Walgreen's for like \$10.00. If you wash it really well, you can also use it for soup!)

MAKING THE SOAP:

Cover all your surfaces with newspaper and don your gloves and masks and goggles. It seems weird that soap can be dangerous, and once it's in your shower, it's not at all. But the process used to make soap involves using lye. **Lye is scary stuff.** It can make water boil just by touching it. You really don't want it to touch you. If you get it on your skin accidentally, douse the spot with white vinegar and wash it off with soap and cold water. When you handle lye, you should wear eye protection and some kind of mask so you don't inhale it. When you mix it with water, pour the water into the bowl of lye very slowly, so that it doesn't boil over or crack the bowl. **Always wear gloves, goggles and a mask when handling lye.**

Blend the water and lye in a heatproof container (that's that pyrex or ceramic bowl). It's gonna get HOT! Cool it to 120° in a water bath (set the bowl in a larger container, pot or bowl, filled with cold water and ice).

While this is happening, heat the olive oil to 120°.

Once the two temperatures match, blend them together and stir until the soap *traces*. Tracing is when the chemical reaction really gets going and the soap starts to harden. The soap *traces* when you pick up your spoon and the soap that falls on the surface holds its shape a little (like thick pancake batter). This process can take minutes, hours or even days. Don't worry if it takes a long time. Just rest and come back and stir it for a while every half-hour or so for the first couple of hours. If you use a stick blender, it can be done quicker. Sometimes your soap won't even trace (it's happened to us). If this happens, just add your essential oils, pour your soap into the mold, cross your fingers and it will probably firm up over night. Tracing will take a long time for this recipe, so don't give up!

Once your soap traces, add essential oils and herbs (check our list of oil/herb recipes for cool combinations).

Pour into your prepared straight-sided box, cover with a towel or blanket and place in a draft-free space (under a bed or couch works well, plus it makes the room smell good) until the soap is solid and firm (24-48 hours).

Once your soap is solid, release it from the mold and cut it into bars using a knife or wire. The lye will still be active until this time, so you need to **handle the soap with gloves** so you don't burn yourself. Once you have cut the bars, put them back in the box or flip the box over and set the bars on top of the box—they shouldn't touch each other. Put all this back into the non-drafty space and let cure (lightly covered) for 8-10 weeks. Your soap may develop brown spots during this time—that's normal and is no reason to toss out your batch like we did the first time we made soap.

Once the time has passed, your soap is ready to go. Yay!

Ideas for Oil Blends

Most essential oils can be purchased at your local health food store or on the Internet. These measurements are for one batch of soap (approx 40 oz). Remember, these are just ideas for combinations. Almost any essential oil could be used.

FOR DRY SKIN:

- 4 teaspoons frankincense
- 3 teaspoons carrot seed

DEODORIZING:

- 3 teaspoons tea tree oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons peppermint oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 2 teaspoons peppermint leaves

INSECT REPELLENT:

- 2 teaspoons clove oil
- 2 teaspoons peppermint oil
- 3 teaspoons geranium oil

DAWNE'S FAVORITE-GOOD FOR YOUR SKIN:

- 2 oz lavender oil
- 1/2 cup old-fashioned (not quick) oats- well ground
- 1/2 oz dried lavender leaves-chopped

OTHER GOOD THINGS TO ADD:

- Calendula petals
- Bergamot oil
- Grapefruit oil
- Poppy seeds
- Patchouli oil
- Dill weed and dill oil
- Eucalyptus oil

Some Handy Soapmaking Sources

BOOKS:

- Country Living: Handmade Soap
- The Soapmaker's Companion by Susan Miller Cavitch
- The Natural Soap Book by Susan Miller Cavitch

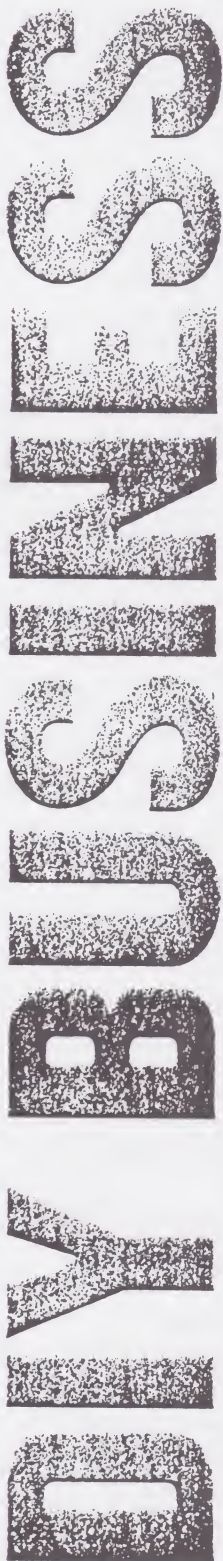
WEBSITES:

- www.silverlink.net/~timer/soapinfo.html
- www.essentialsupplies.com/indexnew.html
- www.wholesalesuppliesplus.com/
- www.waltonfeed.com/old/soaphome.html

That's all there is to it, really. There are *tons* of different recipes for making soap and once you get into it, it's really quite addicting. We make a different soap almost every weekend! Good luck and have fun! ☺

fuck work

by Srimi Kumar



When I first got into punk, there was definitely a sense of "us vs. them" that appealed to me immensely. I grew up in upstate New York during the Reagan era, where classic rock wasn't just a good idea, it was The Law. I remember frantically memorizing Zeppelin lyrics before entering junior high school because the bullies had beat up a kid the year previous for not knowing "Stairway to Heaven" by heart. When punk came to town, it came in the form of Rolling Stone (for Christ's sake) naming "Never Mind The Bollocks" the second best record in the last 25 years (this was in '87). A couple of us sat in the cafeteria paging through the issue, wondering who the hell the Modern Lovers were and how come Rush wasn't in there AT ALL. Slowly but surely, we got hooked up—a kid showed up from another school and taped Dead Milkmen records for us; a sweet penpal from Rochester taped me the Replacements "Stink" backed with Minor Threat (the cause of my first speeding ticket a year later); one of the school's Alpha Preppies showed up one day with a mohawk and "the bars" tattooed on his arm; and Sean's band opened for Sonic Youth in the City. Punk had arrived in Poughkeepsie, 10 years late and just in the nick of time.

These records were our shared secret. You'd wear out the grooves tapping the good stuff for everyone else at the lunch table. It felt dangerous just owning this music—we were breaking The Law. Having stumbled on "subculture," our little isolated cowtown community became the front lines in a cultural war that we thought could someday pose a threat to Reagan himself. Having always been political, I heard in punk the anthems and fight songs that instantly radicalized me and my friends. I have spent my entire life trying to

recapture the magic of that original punk rock "us vs. them" feeling—that sense of new values exposing the utter irrelevance of that which was accepted as gospel by the rest of the world.

One of the ways I decided to do it was to found a company that sold stickers that said crazy things on 'em (we're at <http://www.unamerican.com>—dig the redesign!). In doing so, I decided I would mock and mimic and parody the language of sales (for years, we've gone under the silly sublines "Quality Rebellion At Affordable Prices" and "The Tommy Hilfiger Of Punk Fucking Rock") for fun (remember when punk was fun?). And for five years, it was fun—difficult, very difficult, but fun. I got to work with my best friends, have my creativity be responsible for feeding four people, and learn a whole bunch (too much) about computers (and their errors).

Fast forward a decade. A couple of months ago, I had to endure a five-page drubbing in the pages of the "other" punk magazine, largely because of the views that I espouse in this column—specifically, that I think that it's pretty neat that punk rock's independent stance has led to a lot of really interesting projects that generate enough money to let their proprietors live off the fruits of their labors. Disgusted at this attack, I was all but ready to throw in the towel on the word which had done so much for me in growing up. After all, punk is just another label after all, and I had a business to run on which my closest friends (and, in my sci-fi addled mind, the country) depended.

Ah, but punk dies hard. I'm 27 now, and I can see the situation as it is—that the article that caused me so much grief was about a conflict of differing values trying to stake their claim on the same four-letter word. The major reasons I believe in navigating the contradictions between Punk Rock and Free Enterprise are that I believe that Enterprise isn't going away (and shouldn't, for that matter), and that the punk folks in my life have been some pretty enterprise-oriented people. They're creative as hell, they obsess about their own projects, critique each others' projects, and sometimes seek to undermine the projects of those who don't fit according to their standards. I am partially writing this because I want to banish that last tendency forever from our scene. You don't have to like everything, but if you don't like something, support its alternatives—of which there are inevitably several—or begin your own. Don't just whine—that's the core of my message. Even if your action is as marginal as placing a bumper sticker on your guitar, act, communicate, build and inspire!

I find it ironic that, having been teargassed recently in Seattle, I am seen by some as an apologist for capitalism. I am not saying to tolerate capitalism or capitalists. I am saying fight it—

start businesses that will grab customers away from the assholes and towards a better world (and I believe that all punks want a better world—that's the foundation of our unity).

When I first began this column, I started with sort of a cheery optimism. I saw the potential in the ideas of the punks that figured out how to survive outside of the wage-slave system through creating projects that could support them economically. Hell, I even saw the spiritual potential of punk enterprise. I believed that the experiments in punk enterprise by people like you could entirely change the face of capitalism and thereby alter the destinies of all six billion of us. I had made a couple friends in the punk-rock-biz land (like Pete, Ramsey, Jen Angel, Andy, Jeffrey & Cinder, Aaron Probe, Jux, Devon Morf, Sonny, Mike Park and assorted 'zine folks—what up friends) and boy was I excited to get the story of their difficulties—and their triumphs—out to the Punk Planet audience. But because this is in the "DIY" section of the magazine, I thought I had to continually address topics straight out of marketing handbooks. I don't know if any of you have read the books I've read about marketing, but if you hadn't, I thought maybe I'd summarize them for you punk-style in this column. But I can't write this column in the "How To Do Such-And-Such" format anymore; I have been forced to acknowledge that some of you hate that shit, and I totally respect that. So, I apologize for wasting your time while I get the hang of this column thing.

Between you and me, I was getting sort of tired of just writing how-to's on starting businesses—if you want to read more about it, may I suggest the books *Guerrilla Marketing* and *The Book Of The SubGenius* (or the magazine *Business 2.0* for you web types). Also, I've posted my old articles on my website, if you're interested in reading 'em—judging by the letters I've received, they aren't all bad.

But I am going to change this column to fit what I believe you really do want to read—interviews with punk rock "business" people. I'm looking forward to it myself. In this spirit of change, I am depending on you to help me get started. If you could, get me in touch with people who are at any stage of any project that would like to be featured in this column. There's a lot of wisdom out there, and I hope I can use this column to transmit it to you (and myself too—God I'm so broke right now!) Some of you already have gotten in touch and I'll be in contact with you soon. My "secret" email is srini2@unamerican.com (don't spam me or give this email to spammers, please!) and if you want to send me something, I'm at PO Box 410663, San Francisco, CA 94141-0663. I look forward to hearing from you. ☺

things that go bump in

SEX SEX SEX SEX SEX

Dear Punk Planet and DIY Sex,

Here's the deal. I'm 19 and a virgin. I expect the possibility of having sex will come up sometime soon. I feel that I have avoided it in fear of disappointing my partner. I am quite concerned as to whether or not I will be able to perform well. Is there any advice you can give me to put my concerns to rest?

Thanks,

Sam

I wish I could tell you, Sam, that the first time would be the only time you'd ever suffer from pre-nookie jitters, but unfortunately the jitters (otherwise known as performance anxiety) can be an uninvited third party whether it's your fifth or fifteen-hundredth sexual encounter. And as your question suggests, a large component of performance anxiety is fear of the unknown. For first timers, that can mean just about everything related to sex; for those of us with a bit more experience, it can mean anything from not knowing our partners' preferences to whether the faces we make are sexy or just ridiculous. While avoiding all sexual situations is one way of dealing with the jitters (a technique plenty of people combine with intermittent alcohol-soaked hookups to what is, I'm sure, some marginal degree of satisfaction), it's certainly not the most fun. For myself, I prefer the far more enjoyable and constructive strategy of eliminating as much of the unknown as possible, and proceeding with an open mind, a sense of humor, and a measure of good old-fashioned bravado when it comes to the rest.

For the nookie novice, books are obvious and very safe tools for doing away with the unknown: they require no partner, and they're a great way to learn the basics of anatomy and sexual response sequences (the way arousal builds to orgasm); you can use them as you would a map around a place you've never been,

although I don't necessarily recommend taking them into the love nest with you. *A New View of a Woman's Body*, put out by the Federation of Women's Health Centers, is a particular favorite of mine, with diagrams and even photos of women's sexual organs. For those interested in male anatomy, really great books are a bit more difficult to find, but you might check out *Man's Body: An Owner's Manual*, which at least offers fairly complete diagrams of all the good parts. And anyone who has an asshole really, really should read (keep an open mind, kids!) *Anal Pleasure and Health* by Jack Morin.

Once you've figured out who has what and how it works, there are a variety of general sex manuals out there, including my absolute favorite, the book that resides in its own special spot next to my bed, *The New Good Vibrations Guide to Sex*. These kind of books are like textbooks for How To Do It 101; they offer tips on specific techniques for everything from massage to positions. And if all this seems a bit too studious and stuffy to you, several sets of erotica, including the *Herotica* and *Best American Erotica* series are easy to find almost anywhere, as well as through mail order catalogs, and if you're desperate, Nancy Friday's books of women's sexual fantasies can usually be found in even the most backwoods bookstores. Books like these may not give you direct advice, but you should be able to pick up plenty of creative ideas from them, along with a little inspiration in the meantime.

Being so inspired, following my next bit of advice shouldn't be difficult: masturbate. That's right, onanize, abuse yourself, choke the bishop, pet the bearded beaver...a lot. I had a roommate once who claimed that the best lovers were those that masturbated often, because they knew exactly what they liked; in the years that have since passed, I have found his claim to ring true over and over again. But before you get too busy getting busy with yourself, there are a few things to keep in mind.

As rumor has it, a common problem among the world's young gentlemen is not being able to do the stuff with a partner for more than .0000037 seconds before losing their cool; some theorists hold that this is the result not only of youth and inexperience, but also the habit of going for the daily masturbatory gold in the quickest, most efficient way possible. So try to remember, the next time you're shaking hands with yourself in the shower, that you aren't trying to set an ejaculatory land speed record. Take a few seconds (minutes, hours...) to figure out what spots, other than the last half inch of your penis, can make you writhe and squirm (they're there, trust me). The root of the penis (the so-called "taint"), the scrotum, the thighs, even your bellybutton: these are all excellent places to explore. As for you ladies out there, remember that, among

the night

other things, you possess the only organ in the entire human body built explicitly for pleasure, and that it isn't hidden way up inside you where only semi-cylindrical objects can go. Please learn what you like, not what you think you're supposed to like, okay?

So you've done all this homework, and you've lured the attractive and willing partner of your dreams into your bed without coercion or subterfuge, and you're utterly breathless with anticipation: now what? In my informal and unscientific poll of friends and strangers regarding what makes an excellent lover, one answer was given, in varying forms, by every single one. More often than enthusiasm (which is good), more than skill (which is great), every single person I asked said that the number one quality a good lover should possess is the ability to communicate with—and, if I might add, its corollary: the ability to elicit communication *from*—a partner.

"Communication" is a fairly broad term, I'll admit, encompassing everything from talking dirty to establishing S/M safewords, and learning to be good at it is a lot easier said than, uh, said. But it isn't impossible, and it can be incredibly sexy. For example, a recent overnight guest asked permission, in a husky voice close to my ear, for each thing he wanted to do to me and done to him, eroticizing consent more completely than anyone I've ever been with, and making me absolutely comfortable both giving and receiving suggestions. If you're too shy for this approach, try using your hand and happy noises to guide your partner's parts to where you want them to be, and work in some compliments and encouragement whenever you can. Work up to gentle suggestions, or even mentioning personal preferences when you're not in bed. And for God's sake, ask questions about your partner's likes, dislikes, best sex ever, worst sex ever, and pay attention to the answers. If he or she doesn't have any, I command that you play erotic spelunking: *How's this? And what about this? And this?* and that you practice right now, repeating "Do you like what I'm doing?" and "I'd really like it if you..." each one hundred times.

Oh yes, and one more thing. Sex is silly. Human beings make a range of ridiculous faces and animal noises when in the throes of ecstasy, and nothing puts a wet blanket on the fires of orgasm like self-consciousness. Don't forget to laugh while you're busy having a good time. ©

Keep those questions about sex, sex and sex coming! Also, anyone with personal anecdotes about working in or going to strip clubs, please, please, drop me a line. The addresses are diysex@punkplanet.com and sherig.pob 7564 Ann Arbor, MI 48107. Many thanks to "Sam" for letting me use his excellent question. Lemme know how the first time goes, okay?



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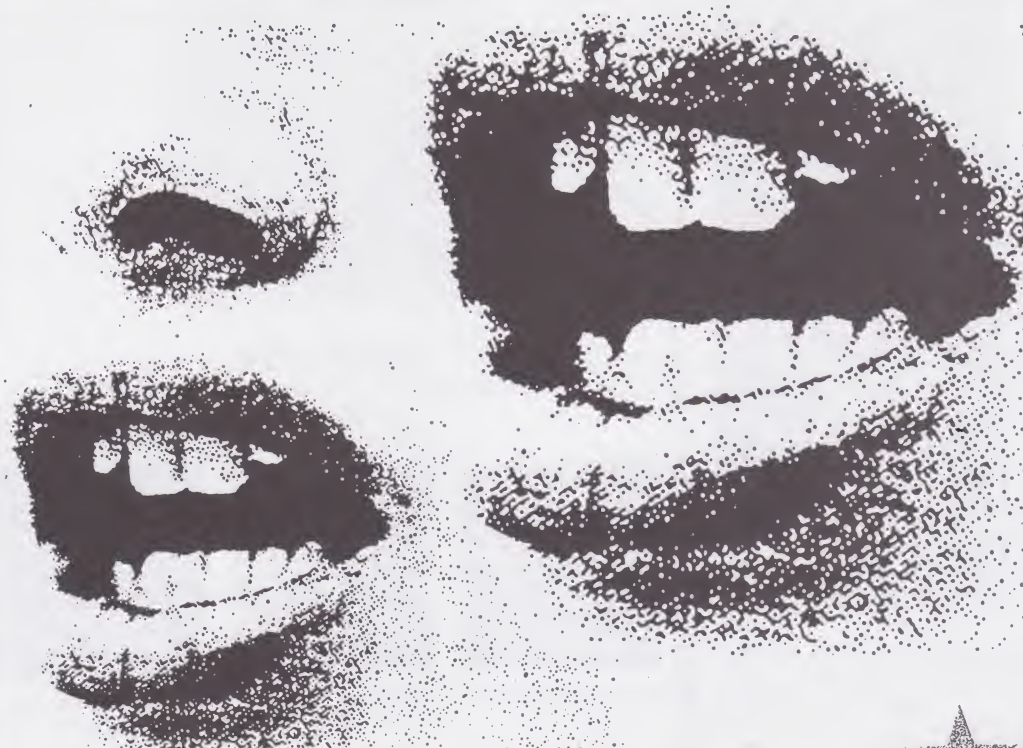
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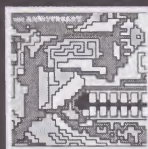
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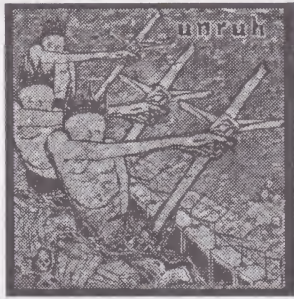


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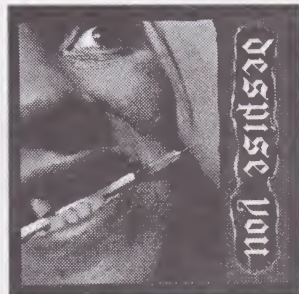
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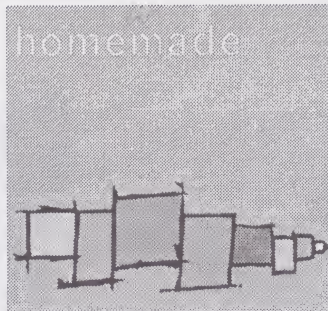
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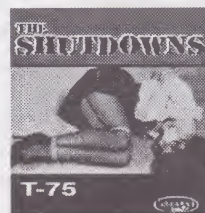
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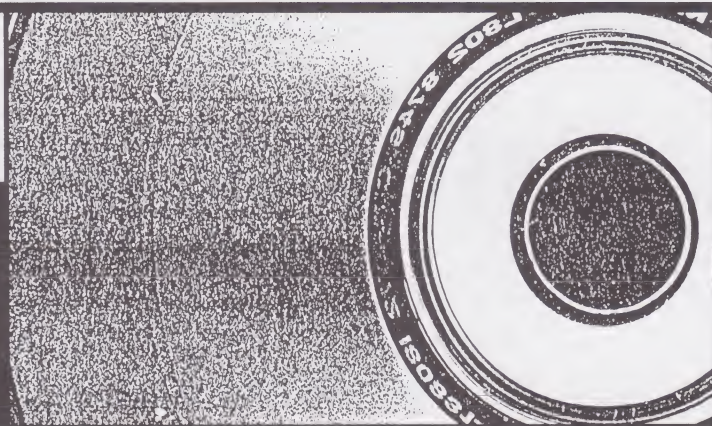
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happy november birthdays to: santos, metal mark, splifford, aaron harris, glenn kelly, monty, anne rymer, loretta roybal, and anyone else i can't think of at the moment.

PLASTIC MUSIC



59 TIMES THE PAIN/SUBTERRANEAN KIDS, SPLIT CD Three songs from each band here. Subterranean Kids appear to be from Spain and play energetic punk, singing in Spanish. They remind me of older California-style punk, maybe from the mid-80s, but they play a little tighter than that. 59 Times the Pain sing in English, but I think they might be from Sweden. They play a more youth-crew style hardcore, but maybe I am biased by their nearly note-for-note cover of "Walk Together, Rock Together." Honestly, if you played this for me I'd think it was 7 Seconds. Anyway, this 10 minute split CD should have been a split 7 inch. (BJM) Tralla Records, Apartado de Correos 37.119, 08080 Barcelona, Spain

ADOLF AND THE PISS ARTISTS - THIS IS YOUR LAW, 7" First off, this band takes the cake for having the worst name. I don't understand what would inspire someone, especially an oi band, to name their band Adolf and the whatever's unless they were paying some sort of homage to Hitler. Fortunately, that's not what Adolf and the Piss Artists are all about. This 4 song 7" is actually full of some catchy punk with a moderate oi influence. The lyrics are all intelligent, covering topics such as unity, not following religions and/or government blindly, and not following fashion or trends. It's too bad they have such a stupid name (which I think would immediately turn some people off), because this is a pretty good record. (MT) 45 Revolutions, P.O. Box 2568, Decatur, GA 30031.

AGORAPHOBIC NOSEBLEED/CONVERGE, SPLIT CD Whoa, watch out. Both of these bands play that bad metal/hardcore with screamed vocals that you usually hear played between bands over the PA at CBGB. The artwork is very metal as well. Looks straight out of Headbanger's Ball or something. Anyway, if you are among those who like this testosterone-fueled nonsense, you should buy this record. It sounds just like the rest of the genre, so I'm sure you'll like it. (BJM) Relapse Records, PO Box 251, Millersville PA 17551

THE ALBUM LEAF - AN ORCHESTRATED RISE TO FALL, CD All songs are written, arranged and performed by pianist/guitarist Jimmy LaValle (from Tristeza). This record comprises very dreamy, even hypnotic, experimental styling with elements of drum-n-bass, classical and pop. (DJK) The Music Fellowship, P.O. Box 581035, Salt Lake City, UT 84158

ALL OR NOTHING H.C. - SACRIFICE, DISCIPLINE, BLISS, CD Almost unbelievably generic SoCal punk garbage-1. The same drum beat in every song 2. Monotone female vocals provided by MRR's Renae Bryant (which is

merely another notch on the wall of why that zine has gone to fucking hell-i.e. the columnists are in shitty bands) 3. The bass player wears two different Exploited shirts in two different pictures which renders this band instantly TWICE as awful as most shitty bands who's bass player can only afford ONE Exploited t-shirt and 4. They have a song called "L.A." in which they attempt to use the word "chic" but instead and quite unwittingly replace it with the word "sheik" nine goddamn times-STRIKE FOUR-YOU'RE OUT. I would like very much to incinerate these boredom-inducing morons along with their equipment, fans and every one of these goddamn CDs but that would be a waste of precious fossil fuels and come to think of it, the fact that they'll surely spend the rest of their lives in LA is a harsh-enough sentence to quench my burning desire for revenge. (RP)

On The Rag PO Box 251 Norco, CA 91760-0251

AMERICAN STEEL - ROGUE'S MARCH, CD Fast and furious hard punk. This band has developed a sound all their own with expert use of blistering guitar that also jangles in all the right places. Great gravel-voiced lead vocals that work well with plenty of harmony vocals and melodies. A fine addition to Lookout's catalog. (DJK) Lookout! P.O. Box 11374, Berkeley, CA 94712-2374

ANN BERETTA - "TO ALL OUR FALLEN HEROS...", CD Aspirin is important. It's made using the same old formula it always has, and it eases pain. It works. Is the same true for punk rock? Hmmm... Ann Beretta's testing it, that's for sure. Solid, tight & snappy. The Rancid comparison is hard to stay away from sometimes. (RB) Lookout PO box 11374, Berkeley, CA 84712-2374

APOCALYPSE HOBOKEN - INVERSE/ REVERSE/ PERVERSE, CD I think these guys used to play at the PIT in Illinois. This is a collection of 7", compilation and various other tracks from '94 to '98. If you haven't heard Apocalypse Hoboken before, they play snotty pop punk similar to 30 Foot Fall or the Vindictives. They're not as funny, but they're not exactly trying to be. The Rites of Spring cover seems a little out of place on here, but a good effort nonetheless. These guys are decent, but the voice gets annoying and 23 tracks of snotty pop punk is a little too mucousy for me. (NS) Suburban Home, P.O. Box 40757, Denver, CO 80204

AS FRIENDS RUST - S/T, CD This five song CDep was a nice surprise. This band successfully takes notes from some sounds of yesteryear, molding them together to make an enjoyable CD. I hear a mid 80's DC influence (i.e., Rites of Spring) as well as a more prevalent east coast sXe hardcore influence (i.e., Gorilla Biscuits). Mix

that with a more modern post-punk band and you'll maybe come close to what these guys are shooting for. Keep in mind they don't sound exactly like the above mention bands or styles, but instead have learned from these bands to create something that is more their own. I anticipate hearing more from them. (MT)

Doghouse P.O. Box 8946, Toledo, OH 43623.

ASSHOLE PARADE - STUDENT GHETTO VIOLENCE, CD You know this band Asshole Parade-they rip. This right here has all of their single and compilation tracks on the one CD. It is essential if you want to be hip to what is happening in the fast hardcore scene. The discography compilation is my favorite type of record in hardcore right now. This CD is no exception and all of the blasts of angry speed will do the trick for you. As a bonus, you get some pictures and an essay on the counter destruction of gentrification movement. Ask yourself; do we really need another chain drugstore in our neighborhood? Go on- ask yourself. (CJK)

No Idea P.O. Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 62604

THE AUTHORITY - ON GLORY'S SIDE, CD Beginning with a sample from the movie "Patton", I could tell that this was going to be a "tough guy" release. Working class street punk from Southern California that combines the power of Oi punk with the feel of catchy rock n' roll. A lot of anthem vocal choruses and a sound reminiscent of The Business, Dropkick Murphys, US Bombs, and even The Clash. Repetitive, boring, and uninspiring. (PB) Outsider, PO Box 92708, Long Beach, CA 90809

THE BAMBOO STEAMERS - THE MANY LOVEMAKING SOUNDS OF, CD With vocals, harmonies, pops, swells and surfs that remind of the best of Jonathan Richman, this is one of the finest and most entertaining pop-rock releases I've heard in the past year. "Miss You Like An Eyeball" is the catchiest number and overall the record is just chock-full of perfect pop songs (including a delicious cover of "Good Girls Don't"). Western Massachusetts continues as a hotbed of indie rock ambition and these guys help lead the pack. (DJK) Gorilla Cookie Recordings, 19 Fairview Ave., Melrose, MA 02176

THE BAR FEEDERS - POUR FOR FOUR, FOR FAVOR!, CD BUY THIS RIGHT NOW!!! Picture Hickey colliding with '82 hardcore (and even a dash of Schlong!) in an amazing tour-de-force-battle-royale-piece-de-resistance and whatever-the-fuck-else you wanna call a CD full of righteous, twisted and truly funny humor backed by raw, catchy, ripping tight-as-fuck and ORIGINAL hard-

core punk rock-JESUSGODALLFUCKINGMIGHTY, I STILL BELIEVE THERE CAN BE GREAT NEW PUNK ROCK BANDS-THANK YOU FOR RENEWING MY FAITH, BAR FEEDERS!!!!!! (RP)

Fastmusic 401 Broadway #2011 NY, NY 10013

BARBARA ANN - LONELY/SECTION 8 O.K., 7" A single in a plain paper sleeve so no address. "Lonely" is slow Lisa Loeb-acoustic crooner with slide guitar and harmonica. "Section 8 O.K." is the Hyde to the side A Jekyll-total cock (pussy?) rocking hell with our best gal screaming quite snot-tily. Now the TRULY weird thing about this is that there's a picture of what looks like a 50's rockabilly-sex kitten type-woman on the labels who strikes me as being not-at-all like the type of person who could sing either of these songs. Without any more info than this, I'm afraid Barbara Ann is destined to remain a mystery. Oh yeah, the songs were co-written and produced by "Ovis" if that helps. Guh. (RP)

Pretty Face Records-no address

BEEFCAKE - REJECTED, CD Upbeat melodic punk from New York with fucking stupid songs about stupid things is what you'll find here. Your average NOFX fan will eat this up, but I can't stomach it. Punk rock and toilet humor are two great tastes that just don't go well together in my book. Unfortunately for me, there are hundreds of bands that don't agree with me, and Beefcake is just one of them. If songs about riding the "little bus" to school when you were a kid, wanting to be a proctologist, and having to take a shit sound good to you, then this is just the thing for you. (MT) Fearless Records, 13772 Goldenwest St. #545, Westminster, CA 92683.

BLOOD OR WHISKEY - S/T, CD First off, I only received the CD cover so I don't have any song titles or even necessarily the correct address. Okay, these are Irish punk rockers who thank the Dropkick Murphys but sound more like The Pogues-traditional acoustic Irish music played with some spirit but ultimately if you can't get into a band that has a banjo and tin whistle, there's nothing I can do for you. This didn't get me too excited, though I don't mind the style, but you can decide if you wanna give these fellas a shot. (RP) PO Box 47 Leixlip, Co. Kildare, Ireland

BOB TILTON - CRESCENT, CD I thought it was a bit odd to see Southern Records reissue this record, which was originally released of the UK's Subjugation Records back in '96. I thought for sure that this band no longer existed, as I hadn't heard anything about them since the original release of the LP. But low and behold, they still exist... and Southern's reissuing of this on CD (and domestically) for the first time is just a teaser for the brand new Bob Tilton record that comes out later this year. Bob Tilton has always been touted as "the British Fugazi", which isn't that far off the mark. I would actually align them closer to Hoover than Fugazi though - they're more about the mid 90's emo than Fugazi in my opinion. Crescent is a fine record that I would recommend to any fan of the angst ridden emo style that was popular before emo turned so damn poppy. (MT) Southern P.O. Box 577375, Chicago, IL 60657.

BRAID - PLEASE DRIVER FASTER, 7" Two more songs from these emo/pop hipsters. Rumored to be there last release, I was pretty unimpressed. I've always liked Braid in the past, but the cheesiness this time around was a bit much. It could be that living in Washington has made me jaded, I don't know. I would never say that Braid is a bad band, I swear to the opposite, in fact. I'm sure hat if you're a die hard fan, you already have it, and if you don't, then you would be all goo goo eyed for it anyway. So what are you waiting for? Stop listening to me ramble and go buy it. It comes on white vinyl too. (FH)

Polyvinyl Post Box 1885 Danville, IL 61834

BRIGHT EYES - EVERY DAY AND EVERY NIGHT, CD We talked into the night. The kind of talk that seemed important until you discover girls. -Alright, alright, Mickey's a mouse, Donald's a duck, Pluto's a dog, what's Goofy? - If I could only have one food for the rest of my life, that's easy, pez cherry flavored pez. No question about it - Goofy's a dog he's definitely a dog - I knew the sixty-four thousand dollar question was fixed. There's no way anybody can know that much about opera - He can't be a dog. He wears a hat and drives a car - Man, Bright Eyes sure sucks dick. I can't stand this Elliot Smith melodramatic bullshit - Wagon Train's a really cool show, but did you ever notice that they never get anywhere? They just keep wagon training - Yeah acoustic guitars and bad singers, I wish those guys would get hit by a train like Ray Brower - God that's weird what the hell is Goofy? (dc) Saddle Creek P.O. Box 8554 Omaha, NE, 68108-0554

BROKEN / REACT / BOILING MAN - THAT WHICH DOES NOT KILL YOU..., SPLIT CD The split CD is something of a waste, especially when it is a three-way split. With a 7" you can clearly flip the vinyl over, but a CD just isn't meant for these type of releases. Onward... Broken is a fast-paced street punk band with the typical instrumentation, at times filtered shouting, and overall generic. React play much more brutal hardcore, but the recording is so shitty that they shouldn't have even bothered releasing it. A lot of un audible shouting and interlocking noise. Boiling Man finish off the disc with a similar sound as React, only with more screamy (but equally as un audible) vocals. Some parts are ripped off directly from Groundwork, which is a big mistake. Broken just don't belong. Reach should find some real recording equipment, and Boiling Man should seek original guitar parts. (PB) Elevator Music, PO Box 1502, New Haven, CT 06511

BRUJERIA - MARIJUANA, CD This is a Spanish hardcore band doing a half hardcore/half dance version of the song "Macarena," except the word "macarena" is changed to "Marijuana," and I assume the rest of the lyrics are different. What did I do to deserve this? Oh yeah, there are a couple of other tracks as well, which aren't any better. (BJM) Tralla Records, Apartado de Correos 37.119, 08080 Barcelona, Spain

BRUTAL TRUTH - GOODBYE CRUEL WORLD! LIVE..., DOUBLE CD Chun chun chun chun!

RAWRR! Growl! Rawr! Chun chun chun! I'm sorry. I know these guys have a history as being this great weed smoking, metal/grind band, however the live shit on disk one is horrible. The quality is there, but the enjoyment level is lacking. The second disk is a bunch of studio tracks from different periods of time including cover tunes. 56 tracks of pure Brutal Truth enjoyment. The only (kind of) redeeming tracks are the cover of MDC's "Born To Die" and two Boredom's tunes. SOOOOO, if you like grindcore metal and/or Brutal Truth, check it out. If you don't, well, you know what to do... (DM)

Relapse Records, P.O. Box 251, Millersville, PA 17551

BST PAYBACK - "DRAGON" B/W "PRICE OF ROCK", 7" This is the debut 7" from this punk/garage/rock band from Washington, D.C. The music is big dumb rock. It sounds like the Gun Club or some early Nineties Touch and Go Jesus Lizard styled rock revivalism mixed with the Swedish punk sound of the Hellacopters, et.al. I would say that the record is completely derivative but BST Payback were able to take two types of music that I barely can tolerate by themselves and make a newish sound that I can not stand. These are the beer guzzling pseudo intellectuals that litter the scene with their feeble attempts to do something different when all that people want is something that sounds safely familiar. Please have the courtesy to bore us with repetition. (CJK) Fandango Records, 1805 T Street, NW #A, Washington, DC 20009, USA

BUZZKILL - HOUSE OF BAD TOUCH, CD Weird hardcore. Weird guitar instrumental tracks. Weird lyrics about Springer and O.J. Weird changes of pace with almost every song. The record is not as extremely weird as the Boredoms or a Mike Patton project but you can tell where it is coming from. At home on Jello Biafra's label. Intentionally weird. (CJK)

AT P.O. Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092

CANINE SUGAR - "EXPLODES LIKE CRAZY BEES", CD This band is a well-kept indie-rock secret. Their name aptly contains the word "sugar," because they're ohhh so sweet. Boys with guitars and more than a couple of songs that you will take as your personal serenades. Let them lean on your shoulder and cuddle you with their chords. But, above all, they pose the most important of questions: "Can we be exploding like crazy bees?" Canine Sugar certainly can. They exploded with rock energy and the shrapnel got stuck to the tape. (RB) Rock Band, 2140 Adelpha Apt. F, Holt, MI 48842

CASUALTIES, THE - "FOR THE PUNX", CD Sitting in a friend's bedroom three years ago, watching a Casualties video and that guy's 3' Mohawk waving around, I never would have imagined they'd still be around now. I know I'd get bored rewriting the same 3 or 4 songs over and over again. You have to kind of chuckle at a group of people refusing to live in the present. But I guess if you're the one who happens to get the formula down pat more than anyone else, you're where it's at. They exist in a

Our review policy is very simple: Is your record on an independent label or self-released? We review it. However, that doesn't mean that it gets a good review. If a reviewer likes your record, you get a good review. If a reviewer doesn't like it, you don't. It's not institutional policy that your record is good or that it's bad, it's just one reviewer's opinion—so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project, and that alone is certainly worth some congratulations! But please, if you're pissed at a review, remember: it's not Punk Planet, it's just one reviewer.

community where the spoils go to those who follow the rules most strictly. Pretty freakin' ironic, isn't it? As for this particular record, they say it best themselves right in the lyrics: "spiky haired drunk punx." (RB)

GMM Records, P.O. Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333

CATHARSIS - PASSION, CD This record prompted me to pull out the most recent issue of Heartattack and read the interview with these guys. While I didn't get the insight that I wanted (meaning, it wasn't that good of an interview) I did get the feeling that these guys were very passionate about what they do. That comes through very well on their new record, appropriately titled "Passion". One of the members of the band describes this as emotional hardcore, and I guess that is a semi-accurate description, even though that term has been cheapened by many bad bands as of late. However, Catharsis manages to really pull you into their music with thoughtful personal lyrics, a seriously hard pummeling sound and nice graphics to make this a really solid record. There's also a lot of experimenting going on with heavy music. One track experiments with a slow reggae guitar riff, while the other utilizes a child's choir. They're both really interesting songs. Good job. (RE) CrimethInc 2695 Rangewood Dr. Atlanta, GA 30345

THE CATHETERS - S/T, CD Fashion punk. Complete with studded belts, aviator sunglasses and Johnny Thunders haircuts. If I can find out if this band is from New York or LA the review ends here. OK, I can't find anything. We'll continue. The music is your average Lazy Cowgirls/Humpers/Electric Frankenstein straight up punk rock thing. The recording is raw enough to stand up to the music that is fairly catchy and rocking enough to get my head to bob a few times per song. This is the type of thing that I expect from this label and I am never disappointed. I can tell you I would not walk out on these guys live. It's rocking. I am little too over the whole "Teenage Trash" thing really psyched up but "The Kids Know How To Rock" so it is all good or it "Ain't So Bad". (CJK)

Empty Records, P.O. Box 12034, Seattle, WA 98102

THE CAUSEY WAY - WITH LOVING AND OPEN ARMS, CD The Causey Way is led by Causey, who also runs a "compound" in Gainesville, FL with Rain Causey, Brian Causey, Michael Causey and Red Causey. It's apparent that Causey has many influences including P.I.L., Devo, B-52's, Pulsars and maybe even Men Without Hats. Causey says "causey" is something felt with the innermost recesses of your physical being, grounded though it is in mathematical proof. The CD includes a judgment form for application to the Causey way. Do all paths lead to Causey? Not mine. (DJK) Alternative Tentacles, P.O. Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092

CAVE IN CHILDREN - S/T, 7" Here is this month's unwanted fill of metal hardcore with hell-fire vocals. The cover depicts grotesque newborn babies, surgical instruments and insects. Everything about this record sickened me. And that's probably exactly the reaction they want. Pathetic. (DJK)

Guillaume De Marie, Caixon, 65500 Vic-Bigorre, France

CEREAL BOX KILLERS - FREE FRIEND WITH PURCHASE, CD I did not want to have to give this terrible pop punk record by this group of youngsters a bad

review. By name checking Our Lady Peace, Third Eye Blind and Prodigy in the song "Monday Night Drinking"; I don't have to. Thank you for sparing me the unpleasant hassle. This record also includes the songs: "Too Cool for School", "Tired of my Girlfriends (sic) Shit" and the bonus track "I'm So Drunk I Could Techno Dance". You figure it out. (CJK) Chapter 13 P.O. Box 7045, Austin, TX 78713

CHICK MAGNET - S/T, 7" If these guys were really chick magnets, they'd probably include a band photo. In any case, they play slow to mid-tempo new wave rock with a late 70's/early 80's flair. Decent. (AE)

Chick Magnet, P.O. Box 811, N. Bennington, VT 05257

CHRIS WARE BAND - MILL CITY'S BURNING, CD The Chris Ware Band is a down and dirty rock and roll band, to put it bluntly. There sound is somewhat unpolished which may add to their appeal. Some songs come off a bit goofy but they still have this particular rock feel about them. The C.W. Band is all about this kind of blues and alcohol drenched punk garage rock feel that goes well with any form of beverage you may find in your local spirit shop or pub. This may be the a decent soundtrack for your next bender. (DM)

Fan Attic P.O. Box 391494, Cambridge, MA 02139

C.H.U.N.K. 666 This is the chronicles of a group of cyclists, I presume from the Portland area, and thus of primary interest to people who can relate. It talks about how cyclists are individualists and a whole bunch of bike inventions (the Co-Operator, the Commuter, tiny bikes). To be honest, I couldn't bring myself to read most of C.H.U.N.K. 666 because I had no desire to learn about bike inventions. But if you have such a desire, this zine gets pretty detailed and so you might want to pick it up. (PB) Megulon-5, PO Box 5791, Portland, OR 97228

CLOUDBURST - LOVE LIES BLEEDING, 7" These guys have the heavy European metal mosh core thing down pretty well. This 7" has three songs of mid tempo metal influenced hardcore that is sure to please any fan of the style. The lyrics are in English, and the booklet has explanations of the songs in both English and French. Recommended. (MT) Mosh Bart Records, 6, rue M. Lalanne, 33800 Bordeaux, France.

COALESCE - 0:12 REVOLUTION IN JUST LISTENING, CD Oh shit. Well let me say that the lyrics are somewhat interesting and come off more as some sort of rambling stream-of-consciousness thoughts than anything else but at least it's apparent what the hell they're talking about (friends, the sex scene (wait, don't shoot yourself yet!)), parental control of the internet (I think), and other personal stuff). HOWEVER, when I come to the music, I find I must be honest with myself and with you fine people, and so it pains me to tell you that this sounds like a heavier version of PRIMUS throwing in an occasional BLACK SABBATH riff and the vocals sound like Donald Sutherland at the end of Invasion Of The Body Snatchers when he points and squeals at that woman-now picture him doing that to you over top of the aforementioned "music" for 23 minutes and 53 seconds. I am deadly serious. "But dude, this shit is BRUTAL!", you say. Yeah? So was the dump I took this morning, except that it was WAY catchier—you'll thank me later. (RP)

Relapse Records PO Box 251 Millersville, PA 17551

COMMON RIDER - LAST WAVE ROCKERS, CD Ok, it's been 10 years since Operation Ivy broke up. After a long absence, here comes Common Rider, featuring Oplvy vocalist Jesse Michaels. For anyone hoping for another band just like Oplvy, don't look here... Things have changed in the past 10 years. The thing that still remains is Jesse's voice and lyrics, which are great to hear if you are or were a big fan of Oplvy. Musically, Common Rider isn't anywhere near as punk as Oplvy, which will probably turn many people off immediately. The songs here all have much more of a pop edge with a much stronger reggae influence than anything Oplvy ever did. There are song good songs on this CD, but if you go into this expecting Oplvy type stuff, you'll be horribly disappointed. (MT)

Panic Button, P.O. Box 148010, Chicago, IL 60614

CONSUMED - HIT FOR SIX, CD Another Fat Records Release. Surprisingly, this time it doesn't sound as much like NOFX, but instead opting to sound like Bad Religion. Imagine Bad Religion with a different name, but actually being able to make the songs sound different from each other. That's something that Bad Religion often failed to do. Not that I'm talking shit about Bad Religion, I liked them a lot growing up, but really, a lot of their songs do sound the same. (FH)

Fat Wreck Chords PO Box 193690 San Francisco, CA 94119-3690

CORTEX BOMB - NEED TO SCREAM HAVE NO MOUTH, CD Counting bonus (hidden tracks? - why?) this contains over thirty experimental, but sadly instrumental, jazz pieces that are done right and superbly played. And I tend to hate jazz, as most jazz lovers are musical snobs. Cortex Bomb seem to lack this pretentiousness and kick out the jams. This will take its place next to my only other jazz records, which happen to be by Naked City. For those who are looking to be musically challenged! The song titles are almost worth the price of admission, and I would love to know what Jazz Planet zine thinks of it. (AS) Mockbrawn Records, PO box 582, Tucson, AZ 85702-0582

CURRITUCK COUNTY - S/T, 7" It's back to basics with this release. A man and his guitar (or two) is all that you get with this one. There is quite a bit sincerity behind the lyrics and the voice of C.C. It's kind of a young and whispering style of vocals singing about one's outlook and personal choices. I needed an extra spin on this so I could find a way to compliment this 7". This release is very Elliot Smith or Simon and Garfunkle-ish if that's what you enjoy. Quite an impressive 7" with many hopes for the future for C.C. (DM) Troubleman 16 Willow St., Bayonne, NJ 07002

DAYS WAIT - SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER DANCE ACTIVISTS, 7" This is the point where my record player broke. I can't do anything with these newfangled machines. So now the world may never know what Days Wait sounds like. I can, however, offer you a detailed description of the seven inch itself. The outer cover is approximately seven inches by seven inches. The front has the name of the band and the title of the album. The back contains a list of songs and full color photos of the band members playing instruments as well as information on the record label itself. The insert has each song in order with the lyrics to the corre-

sponding song. The liner notes also contain words in both English and German which, when combined with a German contact number, leads me to believe this band is from Germany. The record is a heavy white vinyl circle with a hole in the center and grooves to make the record create mysterious sounds on either side A or side B. This record appears to be in proper working order and I highly recommend it to anyone out there who enjoys collecting and storing seven inch vinyl albums. Thumbs up. (dc)

Radiation Star Rennweg 1, 93049 Regensburg
Germany

DEAD END CRUISERS/THROWAWAY GENERATION - SPLIT 7" Heads up Strike fans! And Utters fans (More Scared), for that matter. The Dead End Cruisers side rocks out. They're diggin' the old school, but you can tell they have quite a bit of business doing so. To them, it's a genuine influence, not a cookie-cutter pattern like for most bands. Flip it over and you get a similar style with a pinch of harshness in Throwaway Generation. A good quality record with some passion. What a concept! This style is a nice place to be when it's done right. Take a break from the first Clash album and check this out for a while. (RB)
Unity Squad 354 W 100 N, Logan, UT 84321

DESTROYER - THE TEMPLE, 7" Despite what the name sounds like, don't expect harsh hardcore sounds from this band. In fact, be prepared for two really excellent pop songs. The singer really uses his voice as an instrument. It's very unique and totally takes an average pop band and makes them sound really great. It reminds me of a rough Built to Spill. I totally recommend this record to pop kids. They've got a full length coming out on Catsup Plate records sometime soon, and I'll be all over that as well. (RE)
Endearing Records, P.O. Box 69009, Winnipeg, MB, R3P 2G9 Canada

DIG-DUG - POP TRIO OF THE WEEK, CD Smarter than your average pop-punk. That's the way I've always described this trio. Without sounding too cliché, these guys have managed to make pop punk sound like it means something. They sound inspired as opposed to sounding like they've been churned out of the shitty-pop-punk band-machine. Reading the lyrics (which is a little difficult because they are hand-written) will help you tap into more of what this band is up to. On the negative side, I'd say that this could have been edited down some and the design needs a little help. This is the first full length that they've put out but they have their own excellent 7" on Rebound and a split on this label. If you're interested in one of the best pop-punk Houston has to offer, check this out. (RE)
Act Your Age Records, 3244 Locke Ln, Houston, TX 77019-6208

THE DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN - CALCULATING INFINITY, CD Extremely emotional experiments in hardcore, complete with screaming vocals and ripe with conviction but void of melody. Very intense. (DJK)
Relapse P.O. Box 251, Millersville, PA 17551.

THE DISMEMBERMENT PLAN - EMERGENCY & I, CD Weird, soulless, boring indie rock. Seems to be characteristic of most of the music coming out of DC these days. A friend tells me that they recorded this record for Interscope, who dropped them before releasing it, so I

guess they are kind of big. No matter. I say, "Less art, more rock, please." (BJM)

DeSoto Records

THE DRAGS - SET RIGHT FIT TO BLOW CLEAN UP, CD This was one was tough to review. I love the Drags last full length on Estrus and this one is a lot different. Gone are the days of simple three chord garage songs. They added a guitar and changed drummers and we now have a new sound. The disc picks up quite a bit, but still is almost a different band to me. That all put away this is a great disc. More experimenting, and a lot more music this is the record that the Drags will be proud of. Though I think that most old fans will reject this, after repeated listening this is still one of the better discs to come out lately. (EA)
Estrus Records PO Box 2125 Bellingham, WA 98227

THE DRONES/ADOLF & THE PISS ARTISTS - GET SORTED TOUR '98 SAMPLER LIVE, 7" Recorded live, this record completely captures the spirit of two similar, yet different, old school styled '77 punk bands on the road. I can see the spiked hair and leather jackets. I can smell the body odor. The Drones are the tamer of the two bands, which is like saying that one of my Grandmas could kick the other one's ass in a fight. Both of the bassists in these bands sound like an early Sting and the lyrics mention the Queen and bootboys. Punks laugh at hippies for being completely out of touch and devoted to a style and aesthetic that serves no purpose except to blindly worship the past. (CJK)
45 Revolutions, P.O. Box 2568, Decatur, GA 30031

DYNAMITE BOY - FINDER'S KEEPER'S, CD Not to be confused with the superior Kid Dynamite, Dynamite Boy is an above-average pop-punk band from Austin that redefines the genre. Instead of just singing songs about girls, they sing songs about SPECIFIC girls! Fans of Lag Wagon and All will love this one. The band's been around for five years and this CD was produced by pop-punk master Jim Goodwin. The songs are fast and catchy. What else can one ask for in a pop album? Works for me. (AE)
Fearless 13772 Goldenwest St. #545, Westminster, CA 92683

EDALINE - I WROTE THE LAST CHAPTER FOR YOU, CD The layout of this CD is designed to look like a book. How do you like that? Edaline play pretty, somber music with an occasional burst of power, and then back again. It reminds me of early Braid or Promise Ring, but better musically. If you're a fan of those bands or other mellow indie bands, I'm sure you'd like this too. (NS)
Law of Inertia, 205 Dryden Rd., Suite 154, Ithaca, NY 14850

EGG RAID - GO KISS THE BLIND, CD I don't know where this band is going. In some ways this is good. The first couple of tracks, along with other scattered songs/1st hidden track, I was comparing to the band the Feederz. Not really in sound but in style. A peculiar sound that didn't sound like anything else out there. A somewhat off key, monotone vocalist with a kind of a lo-fi sounding punk band behind him. Kind of a 80's-ish, art-punk sound at times. This is not a knock at all. It's when this ska song and some of the faster tunes come on that some of the appeal disappears. I may be a bit stern with this review but a good part of this CD has a decent sound to it that sounds as if it were

intentional and not a poor recording fault. The art work/packaging to this release is pretty cool. Not bad. (DM)
FEK Records, 5 Church Fields Talgrth Brecon Powys LD3 0BD

EGGHEAD - DUMB SONGS FOR SMART PEOPLE, CD Mutant pop strikes again! This time with a collection of songs that spans the career of Egghead, a band that I had previously not heard of. The writer of the liner notes likens them to classic bands like Big Star and The Velvet Underground, in that those bands weren't popular in their time but everyone who heard them went on to form a band. However, judging from the mediocre pop-punk (with emphasis on the words *pop* and *mediocre*) I wouldn't say that this music will be remembered for that long. There are a couple of decent pop tunes on this, but on a whole I didn't respond to this at all. (RE)

Mutant Pop 5010 NW Shasta, Corvallis, OR 97330

ENDGAME - HERE IS WHERE TOMORROW STARTS, CD (what our reviewer doesn't know is that we have secretly switched his Get Up Kids CD with an Endgame CD. Let's see if he can tell the difference) Man the get up kids are good. I have seen them a couple of times and I really just love their sound. It's a perfect fit and just makes me feel good when I listen to it. - what? wait this isn't the Get Up Kids, c'mon, seriously, get out of here...wow. Boy is my face red. Man wait until I tell the wife and kids.(dc)
SpectraSonicSound P.O. Box 80067 Ottawa, ON, CAN k1s 5n6

ESTRELLA 20/20 - AFRO MEXICANA, CD Japan's version of the Lord High Fixers is brought to you by no other than Estrus Records and produced by one Mr. Tim Kerr. This stripped down - punk - blues thing is getting popular these days. On this CD you get the 10" and they debut Estrus 7" that has one killer cover of the Big Boys "Red/Green" that features a cool slide guitar. This release has some real stand outs and made me a fan. Once again the Japanese have figured out Rock 'n' Roll. (EA)
Estrus Records PO Box 2125 Bellingham, WA 98227

THE FAINT - BLANK WAVE ARCADE, CD You can't fool me, this is new wave isn't it. You heard me I said neeew waaave. Fucking Flock of Seagulls synthesizer pop. Seeing as it's officially been twenty years I reckon you can play 80's music and call it "retro" now. Just look at how successful The Wedding Singer was. Unfortunately for The Faint, Adam Sandler isn't in their band and new wave is only cool because nobody plays it anymore. I hope this band started as a joke or a dare.(dc)

Saddle Creek, P.O. Box 8554 Omaha, NE 68108-0554

FEDERATION X - S/T, CD Take two guitars with only four strings, play them through bass cabinets, and add a kick ass drummer and you've got Federation X. Their style of Rock n' Roll is in your face and just plain dirty. Not dirty as in nasty, but dirty as in rollin' around in it. Their album captures them well. There isn't another album I've heard this year that rock me as much. I highly recommend. (FH)
Molasses Manifesto 1210 C. St. Bellingham, WA 98225 USA

FINE TO DRIVE - S/T, CD See Meatjack review. (RB)
PopSmear Records, 6687 Sonoma Hwy., Santa Rosa, CA 95409

THE FLUX - VITAMIN ASS, CD Punk rock, alternating trashy and poppy, with vocals of both sexes. You can hear the Blondie influences in a lot of places (they even cover "Heart of Glass"). The pop songs are the better of the lot; the more rocking songs tend to get ruined by vocals that get on one's nerves after a while. (BJM)

Fan Attic PO Box 391494, Cambridge MA 02139

FRED FRITH & HENRY KAISER - FRIENDS & ENEMIES, 2xCD These baby boomers did a few too many drugs and have a few too many dollars to spend on excessive instruments and recordings. This has absolutely nothing to do with punk. (RB)

Cuneiform Records, P.O. Box 8427, Silver Spring, MD 20907-8427

FRIGG A-GO-GO - THE WINNING SCORE, CD The sound of this record, long over in the CD player, is still ringing in my head. I am singing along my review to the music. It goes like this: Frigg A-GO-GO. Baby. All right. Organ driven garage rock. Yeah. C'mon. Recorded by Tim Kerr. Yeah. Rocking down in Austin, TX. Yeah. All right. These boys know how to rock. All right. C'mon. Let me get into my groove. Yeah. All right. Rock. Yeah. C'mon. (CJK) Scooch Pooch Records, 5850 West 3rd Street, Suite 209, Los Angeles, CA 90036

THE FROWNIES - S/T, CD This is a pleasant surprise—very powerful three-piece here doing interesting, well-written 90's melodic (not "pop") punk stuff. The lyrics are goofily-serious yet serious when they're goofy (relax—I don't know what the hell I'm talking about, either) and they really mix up the songs well because I don't get into this type of stuff too much but it certainly kept me interested and every teenager with an Avail patch located somewhere on their person would certainly like this even more than I did, I'll bet. I can't come up with a really good comparison, suffice to say that if all those Fat and Fat-wannabe bands owned Radon records instead of Lag Wagon records, we'd have more bands like The Frownies and this world would be a much nicer place. Yeah, Avail meets Radon sounds about right after repeated listening—I dig it. (RP)

Fastmusic 401 Broadway #2011 NY, NY 10013

FUNNY LOOKING KIDS - PICTURE DAY, CD I would have dismissed this pop punk/ska-punk quartet if not for being so damn funny. It's rare nowadays to hear someone playing pop punk that really makes me want to listen. Once you get past the 3-4 different styles, you've basically heard it all. While this band didn't really push any boundaries, an all out entertaining sense of humor and ability to write decent pop songs makes this an all right catch. (FH) Fast Music 401 Broadway #201 NY, NY 10013

GIZZARD - KILL AND REISSUE, CD This pretty much sounds like Morphine, only with guitars. The singer's voice is a little different too, but this is very comparable. Gizzard has that bass heavy, choppy sound that made Morphine unique. I'm not sure if the title of this CD implies that this is a reissue since there isn't any information other than the band members and the record label's address. These guys might have had the jump on Morphine. Or maybe these guys killed that guy in Morphine to take control of their sound. Who knows? After a lot of crappy CDs though, this doesn't sound too bad. (NS) Drazzig, 3201 Riverside Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32205

GLASS CRAFT - S/T, CD If Fugazi made Ian scream back up vocals for a thirteen year old girl. (dc)

The Sunflower tribe P.O. Box 618 MP, CA 93020

GONE DADDY FINCH - "DON'T LET HER PUSH YOU AROUND," B/W "SHOWN THE LIGHT," 7" The A-side here is a rocking pop number, a la the Replacements. Probably the first half-decent thing I got to review this issue. The B-side is a more easy-going, slower pop number which unfortunately does not do as much for me. (BJM)

Norman Fell PO Box 23187, Toledo OH 43623

THE GUNS OF AUGUST - DENVER, 7" Jazzy drumming, non-stop octave chords up the fucking ass, a singer who's got a range of one note and a song called "Denver"—I'm at the end of my goddamned rope with this crap. The other song is called "Cease To Exist" but unsurprisingly is not the Charles Manson/Red Cross classic. They're from Houston—this is like the fourth largest city in America and begs the question—what musical horror hath the home of Really Red wrought??? The horror's name is The Guns Of August but as of today I'm rechristening them The Generic Emo Shitheads Of January. (RP)

Act Your Age Records 3244 Lock Lane Houston, TX 77019-6208

THE HADES KICK - ATÉ, CD I had the chance to see these guys one time in their brief one year appearance on the Texas rock scene. I wasn't paying much attention, but then again this is one of those bands that are more appreciated, I think, in the recorded state. So it's nice that they put this album out. Post-rock? Yeah, I guess. It's good whatever it is. It's pretty all around. I was doubtful at first that I'd listen to this as much as I have, but I find myself playing it all the time. Very clean guitar, bass, and keyboard parts with a light-voiced singer half the time and instrumental half the time. It's too bad this band had to split up. They also have a 7" out on this same label so be sure to pick it up too. It's not a record to die for, but it's definitely a winner amongst the rest of the bands trying to pull off the pretty sensitive rock. (RE)

Thick as Thieves, P.O. Box 7774, Austin, TX 78713

THE HADES KICK - ATE, CD This is the remnants of the Texas band, Hades Kick (2/98-2/99). This band was a colorful and exciting collaboration from members of bands as At The Drive In, Trigger Quintet and Carbomb to name a few. It is a shame that the members parted way because this is one of the most interesting CD's I've heard in quite a while. Hades Kick touch upon punk, indie, and experimental and progressive rock. Each song is set up in a way that the traditional song structure isn't used. There a lot of musical build ups with angry guitars and vocals that return to a quieter part of the shadows to whisper to its listening audience. At times I hear an influence of Cap'n Jazz or Superchunk, but then get a blast of psychedelic rock and some crazy organ/ ray gun/ static thing. This release is just an excellent release. Recommended. (DM)

Thick As Thieves P.O. Box 7774, Austin, TX 78713

HI-STANDARD - MAKING THE ROAD, CD Typical Fat records sound, but as interpreted by a Japanese band. As with most Japanese bands, they do toss in some crazy, more eclectic parts, but overall the only difference from other pop hardcore bands is the foreign accent on the

vocals. Entertaining pop punk version of the Black Sabbath ballad, "Changes", though. (AS)

Fat Wreck Chords, P.O. Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690

HINDSIGHT - THE NATURAL SCIENCE EP, CD It starts out with a song called "Coalesce" that, although it is clearly not a tribute song to that popular band, sounds a bit like them with the noisy modern hardcore vibe. The title track of the record sounds like a really ripping Foo Fighters. Track three, "Sandcastles" is fast as hell modern rock and I am starting to get impressed. The rest of the record follows suit. I am not really the most dedicated modern rock fan but this record was fast enough to keep my interest. Most of these modern rock bands have the down tempo track to let mister whiny vocalist cry for four minutes. Hindsight keeps it rocking. Good record. (CJK) Building Records, P.O. Box 1010, Dee Why, NSW 2099 (that is what the address said)

HOMEMADE - WHAT WERE WE GETTING INTO, BEFORE WE GOT INTO THIS?, CD Armed with a nuclear reactor full of raw energy this quartet delivers a powerhouse record. The opening track "Turn It Off" made me want to turn it way up. Pumped-up punk rock with a great attitude. Best wishes, fellas. (DJK)

Theologian Records, P.O. Box 1070, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254

HOSEMOBILE, THE - WHAT CAN & CAN'T GO ON, CD Eight-minute instrumentals, laid back and emo style. But can I compare them to Don Caballero and/or Euphone, you ask? Perhaps, but I won't. I can say that I don't think these instruments and these arrangements were meant to be without vocal/lyrical content. I think rock music is made to support the lyrical thesis - be an extension of what you want to say. Now if you do it in a jazz style, have some stuff floating over a base, then it's worthy. But I don't think this record pulls that off. It comes off as a bunch of musical parts that would be too intrusive for vocals, yet not intrusive enough to stand alone. Plus they used some wah wah, that's a pet peeve. (RB)

Cuneiform Records, PO Box 8427, Silver Springs, MD 20907-8427

HYSTERIC - YOU LOSE SOME, YOU LOSE SOME MORE, CD I get some ridiculous CD's, I get some more. Bor-ing! (RB)

Flammable Records, PO Box 7714, Chicago, IL 60680-7714

INDECISION - RELEASE THE CURE, CD Grrr! Rrrr! Yeah. The jocks be moshin' and this be their soundtrack. Sure, their lyrics are trying to tell you that they're using their heads, but their chugga chugga begs to differ. So get out there and kick some heads in; but don't forget your cargo pants, basketball jersey, or Indecision CD or everyone will think you're a pussy-boy, yo. (RB)

MIA 315 Church St. 2nd floor, New York, NY 10013

IMPEL - OMNIDIRECTIONAL, CD Well, since I already own this CD, I'm pretty familiar with it. Impel play heavy, groovy post hardcore with definite similarities to Quicksand. But the music and vocals are varied enough to keep them from being a carbon copy. The singer goes from singing to speaking to yelling while the music chugs

and drives at a mid paced speed. There's one weird remix type song that can be skipped over, but other than that, this is a really good CD. (NS)

Vinyl Communications, P.O. Box 8623, Chula Vista, CA 91912

IMPEL/DIVISION OF LAURA LEE, SPLIT 7" Impel are from California and play slow hardcore. Division of Laura Lee are from Sweden and are definitely hardcore-influenced, but have a more dissonant indie rock or "emo" sound when compared with Impel. I prefer the Division side, but maybe that's just me. (BJM)

Carcash Records, PO Box 39, 46221 Vanersborg, Sweden

INKANZYCIA- SLOWO, 7" I'm sorry, but eastern European languages and rock don't mix. At least not in my head. There is something about it that I just can't stand. My mind can't comprehend it and there's no flow. Inkanzycia are a hardcore band from Poland, and they were no exception to the rule. (FH)

Nikt Nic Nie Wie PO Box 53 34-400 Nowy Tall Poland

INSECT GODS- S/T, CD This is pretty straight forward pop music along the lines of Frente. I suppose you could add in a bit of the Pixies and you would pretty much have them. I liked the album a lot. I recommend any pop fan to invest in it. And hey, they're from Canada! (FH)

Permafrost Records PO Box 69009 2025 Corydon Ave. Winnipeg, MB Canada R3P2G9

INTRANSIT - S/T, CDEP Nice artwork and packaging. Now for the music. I could see this band being on Deep Elm. Competent, but somewhat bland indie/post hardcore stuff with good vocals. Sometimes it sounds like Mineral or Christie Front Drive, but more rockin'. The music is well played, with each instrument complimenting each other well. Actually, this is starting to grow on me. I don't know if this is their first release, but it's a promising start. (NS)

Intransit, P.O. Box 1147, Selden, NY 11784

THE JACKIE PAPERS - I'M IN LOVE, CD Lookout has turned to this - a band that sounds like part Screeching Weasel and parts Descendents/All. Funny enough it was sequenced by Ben Weasel and Mixed by Bill Stevenson. Recycled, expected and slick layout, packaging for a whole 6 songs clocking in at just thirty-two ticks over 11 minutes. (EA)

Lookout Records

JAZZ JUNE - BREAKDANCE SUBURBIA, CD Musically these guys have always reminded me of early Jawbox stuff, but with a vocalist that can't sing very well. I can also hear some Cap 'n' Jazz influence, which makes me wonder about the name of their band as well... what's up with all these post-punk bands that have "jazz" in their name? Anyway, this CD collects tracks from a couple different 7"s, songs from their split 7"s with Mid Carson July and Peterbuilt, and from a few different compilations. I'm not the biggest fan of the current crop of Midwestern post punk stuff that these guys seem to be chomping on, but I can recognize that they aren't a bad band. This is not my thing. (MT)

Initial P.O. Box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217.

JEJUNE/DIGNITY FOR ALL - SPLIT 7" I thought I remembered Jejune being more upbeat from their split

with Jimmy Eat World, but this is very somber, melancholy stuff. They have that British indie pop sound on this record that reminds me of Ride or Swervedriver. The male vocals are very quiet and soft and then the haunting female vocals come in every now and then. A pretty good song by Jejune. Dignity For All turn in 2 songs, one short instrumental and one slightly upbeat one in comparison to Jejune. They also have a slight indie pop sound, but a little more poppy, like the Get Up Kids. The drums on their songs are recorded very weak. But other than that, I have no complaints with this 7". (NS)

BWR, 325 Huntington Ave. No.24, Boston, MA 02115

JEREMY BOYLE - SONGS FROM THE GUITAR SOLOS, CD Jeremy Boyle, a member of the ever popular Joan Of Arc, has here a solo CD of ambient music comparable to that of Oval or something of that ilk. The gimmick is that the six songs here were supposedly put together from taking samples from six different guitar "heroes" of the 70's, showering the samples with effects so they can't be recognized, and layering and looping them to create "songs". You could never tell that from just listening to the CD, as the "music" on here is about as boring and non-descript as it comes... possibly quite suitable for going to sleep to. The whole idea reeks of pretentiousness, is definitely not my thing, and most likely never will be. (MT)

Southern P.O. Box 577375, Chicago, IL 60657.

JESSICA SIX - ALL GOOD THINGS, CD This is the long over-due discography by one of Houston's coolest indie-pop bands from the last few years. The singer has gone onto another super pop band called Port Vale, who have a CDEP and 7" out on Ojet and almost everyone in this band was a part of one or two other amazing Houston bands of years past (Schrasj, Monstro, Planet of the Apes, etc). I always got so happy when I saw them. And even more excited when I heard them. Many people felt their live presence wasn't something to behold, but I disagree. Every time that J6 played "Swingin' Naturals" with that ever-so-catchy chorus "C'mon c'mon boys and girls action! action! action!", I was jumping around like it was my first show. Comparisons to Superchunk are inevitable, but J6 are different too. Clean guitars, Lance's very recognizable voice, and an ass-shaking good time for all. (RE)

Act Your Age 3244 Locke Ln, Houston, TX 77019

THE JESUS LIZARD, BANG, CD The Jesus Lizard played their last show a year ago (March 25, 1999), but fans can re-live the band's early years with this compilation of singles, demos, and live material. Most folks either love them or think they're pretentious and over-arty. The music is unusually complex, but it's still punk as fuck. I'm told that their most jaded fans hate their later releases, but "Bang" showcases the Lizard at its rawest. Recommended both for fans and as an intro to this now classic band. (AE)

Touch and Go, P.O. Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625

JOHN CUSACK ATTACK, THE - AN EXQUISITE CORPSE, CD Sweet name, huh? Very DIY and one-time live recording (vocals & all), so it sounds kinda crappy, but not too bad, and the songs are there. It's not uncommon to catch myself with some of these tunes in my head. Suburban punk pop rock. Not like a crappy pop-punk, though. More like one of those bands that always show up on a Very Small comp

that you've never heard of. Cute packaging - ziplock baggie and a dead flower. But maybe some lyrics, eh? (RB)

Red Scare/For the Fun of it, 2420 Walnut Lake Rd., West Bloomfield, MI 48323

JONAH'S ONELINEDRAWING - SKETCHY EP#1, CDEP Is this emo or indie? Who knows? My girl said it was indie hippie music. I can see it now. A bunch of indie kids around a campfire singing Jonah's Onelinedrawing tunes. Kind of catchy and poppy and kind of uncreative all at the same time. I can see kids that were really into really melancholy emo music thinking this was the best stuff since Prozac. Yahoo! I'm not AS depressed now. I'm just kind of mousy and in touch with my feelings. Don't get me wrong, I'm about the "emo". But this? I don't know. I'll pass. (DM)

Crank Records, www.crankthis.com

JUGHEAD'S REVENGE - PEARLY GATES, CD Years ago I heard an album by these guys that, at the time, seemed like a metal record, but now they've co-opted that Pennywise, Warped Tour thick punk rock sound. Good, but nothing is there to help it stand out from the seemingly millions of other similar releases. Very nineties California sounding, crossing early Dagnasty with Descendents. I just require more interesting lyrics. (AS)

Nitro Records, 7071 Warner Ave., F-736, Huntington Beach, CA 92647

JULIE DOIRON AND THE WOODEN STARS - S/T, CD Good thing they've got "wooden" in the name 'cuz this sure sounds awfully wooden to me. Mopey vocals drone on and on over minimalist background music. Cool sketches on the packaging, though. (AE)

Tree Records, P.O. Box 578582, Chicago, IL 60657

KERMIT'S FINGER - NEGATIVE MENTAL IMAGES, 7" Is he singing or taking a dump? Sounds like a deranged, beer-swilling Kermit, maybe, but definitely not the cute little Muppet we all know and love. Why are there so many songs about rainbows? Why are there so many bands that write a song called "Fuck You?" I can't believe they're Subhumans fans - I have to believe they'd be better if so. Oh wait, maybe that says *Kermiet's finger*....oh, nope. False alarm. (RB)

Poorest Quality Records, PO Box 458, Boston, MA 02129

KID DYNAMITE - SHORTER, FASTER, LOUDER, CD Real good hardcore with poppy breaks that live up to the title of being short, fast, and loud. Could be the well produced brother band to say Dillinger Four. Lyrically, it sounds intelligent, but the overall wordiness make them difficult to discern. Would have fuckin' loved to have a lyric sheet so I could tell you more, but Jade Tree decided to issue a special promo CD without a jewel case embossed with the words "Don't sell on eBay!" and a release date of 2/15/2000. If they can afford to print up special promo only CDs, why can't they afford to include the artwork? The bands and labels only suffer at the hands of the reviewers. I actually read liner notes, etc.! Just for that I'm selling mine to the first kid who can hand me fifty cents and ending with some choice words for potential buyers who read reviews bottom to top like I do. Asinine. Lame. Completely fucking retarded, stupidly insulting. (AS)

Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810

THE KILLINGTONS — AMERICAN, CD The pop-rock trio from Long Beach, CA cranks out the jams and melodies on this three-song prelude to a full length due out later this year. They deliver a wall of sound not unlike My Bloody Valentine and with aggression a la the Jam. (DJK)
Vegas PO Box 2175 Newport Beach, CA 92659

KILOWATTHOURS — ALL THINGS REGARDING, CD This is a moody emo pop-rock opera of sorts that differentiates itself with piano-based songs. It's a rhythmic and densely layered seven-song anthem. (DJK)
The Temporary Residence, Ltd. Box 22910, Baltimore, MD 21203

KING FOR A DAY- BEFORE I GO, CD Almost inspiring emo/hardcore from Louisville, KY. I have a feeling I've heard really good things about these guys in the past, but I just can't place it. Anyway, the songs were filled with emotion. The music only multiplied what the lyrics were trying to convey, and with all of the little intricacies, nuances, and bouts of confessions, it sweeps you off of your feet. (FH)

Initial Records PO Box 17131 Louisville, KY 40217

KITTENS FOR CHRISTIAN - IS THIS WHAT SEX IS LIKE?, CD Is this what sex is like? Maybe, if the only sex you have is fucking horrible. This is what sex with a piece of steel wool or sex with a prison inmate or sex with a bag of rusty nails or sex with a mountain lion might be like. Really painful, lots of unintelligible nonsensical screaming, seems like it lasts forever, you can't wait until it is done and afterwards you feel dirty and violated for having had the experience. Yes this is exactly what that kind of sex is like. (dc)

Dirtbox P.O. Box 3092 Burbank, CA, 91508-3092

LAWNDARTS - VOLUME 2, CD This 5 piece band from New Jersey plays fairly generic melodic punk, a genre that is pretty tired in my book. On this CD you'll find plenty of songs about girls, a few songs about childish things (i.e., making prank phone calls), an obligatory cover of a classic 80's hit... All of the ingredients for a generic melodic punk record are here. It shouldn't be any surprise for me to say that the Lawndarts went ahead and made themselves one hell of a generic record! Good for them! (MT)
Lawndarts 538 Franklin Terrace, Wyckoff, NJ 07481.

LONNIE JAMES - DEE-O, CD I hear a lot of different influences here: Beatles, Rolling Stones, Clash, surf, and lord knows what else. It all makes a mellow sort of rock, with heavy emphasis on the vocals, which are especially laid back and mellow. Perhaps the inside jacket photo of the sides of a bunch of records is supposed to explain where this music comes from: Zep, Nuge, Beach Boys, Sabbath, Floyd, Woodie Guthrie, and a couple of the above mentioned bands all in one collection. Plus Neil Diamond, right near the top. It's kind of boring at times, but overall it's an OK record. (BJM)

Teenage USA Recordings, PO Box 91, 689 Queen St. W., Toronto Ontario M6J 1E6 Canada

LOOSE LIPS — TALKIN' TRASH, CD Loose Lips crank off twelve absolutely terrific garage/punk tunes. This is rock 'n' roll. Formerly of San Francisco Bay area bands the Rip-Offs, the Infections, the Spoiled Brats and the Spastics the four Lips salute everyone from the New York

Dolls and The Heartbreakers to The Who, The Rolling Stones and even the Beatles. It's all very well crafted and red-hot with some of the tightest, sauciest, spiciest and dirty-glam guitar riffs any side of the Mississippi. One of the best punk records I'll hear all year. (DJK)
TKO Records, 4104 24th St., #103, San Francisco, CA 94114

LORD HIGH FIXERS — IS YOUR CLUB SECRET, CD Tim Kerr and his secret club is back again. This is an album not a collection of songs. Whether it's the attention to the order of songs (does anyone else think about the order of songs), or the samples and choice covers. The harmonicas, harps, synths and horns layered make this a whirlwind blues-punk-rock explosion that is going in so many directions and one (albeit secret) direction at once. The production is flawless and like early great bands like the Big Boys or the Minutemen I feel like I am listening to a Record not a bunch of songs recorded for whatever. Kerr know what he is doing and a lot of it rubs off to bands we see him producing. This is their best to date, bastard Whatcha gonna do? (EA)

Estrus Records PO Box 2125 Bellingham, WA 98227

THE LOVED, S/T, CD Folky, mild rock played by guys that used to play emo (Benny Clark was in Falling Forward). I find it interesting that even the band's own promo material refers to the band's pace as "lazy." Maybe I'm missing something, but the thought of intentionally creating bland and sluggish music strikes me as more than odd. (AE)
Temporary Residence Ltd., P.O. Box 22910, Baltimore, MD 21203

MAD HATER/TOMMIEGRIGGZ - SPLIT 7" What is this crap supposed to be? You know those little hand-held tape recorders that you take to class if you want to record your teacher's lecture? The one with the miniature tape, and when people cough it overpowers everything, and they generally sound really horrible, even for that purpose? Well, I think this record was recorded with one of those. Don't get me wrong, that sound could be sweet if it was some thrashin', angry punk rock, but this is just weirdo-sitting-in-a-bedroom type stuff. The best part is they do it on purpose, *know* that it sucks, yet put forth the effort anyway. Bizarre. (RB)
Toxic Cry Productions, 1116 W. 7th St., Columbia, TX 38401

MAIN STREET SAINTS - EVERYBODY WANTS TO GO TO HEAVEN..., CD "Hey! When the Saints go marching in..." Quite a bit laughable. Doesn't exactly suck schlong, but it's skinhead drivin' with bad, bad lyrics. They're all about drinkin' & tattoos. Oi oi oi oi oi oi drinkin' & tattoos oi oi oi. (RB)

GMM Records, P.O. Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333

MALDOROR - SHE, CD Are these people some kind of supergroup, Mike Patton (Faith No More ?) and Masami Akita (??) Anyhow, I'll call this the electronic equivalent to Lou Reed's Metal Machine Music. Jeez, somehow I got to mention that album twice this issue! Like MMM, a lot of people will definitely have trouble calling this music. Background noise, that at times makes sounds whose only purpose could be to cause hearing damage. This may even annoy Boredoms fans! A real room clearer! Good job!. If that was your intention, and beautifully expensive

packaging to boot. It's a keeper, just because I like to be a musical ass sometimes. (AS)

Ipecac P.O. Box 1197, Alameda, CA 94501

THE MASONS — PLYMOUTH ROCK, CD This is stripped down rawk ala Oblivians. Seventeen tracks, including a Sonics and Elvis Presely cover that are both top notch. The production is rather muddy, but its got the grooves that keep it going. Once you see the Firebird on the cover and the flames that surround the disc you know exactly what you are getting here. (EA)

Middle Class Pig Records e-mail (its Germany)

Middle_Class_Pig@t-online.de

MASTERCASTER - THE GOLDEN AGE OF TRADE, CD Judging by the song titles and the insert photos I thought that this might be a country blues album. But, no, it's sort of mishmash cross between Sonic Youth and Pussy Galore complete with buried monotonous vocals, making the lyrics hard to decipher. So I didn't. Like those two bands, most people, myself included, either think that they are gods or just inept boobs. This falls somewhere in-between depending on my mood. It definitely got better with repeated listening. (AS)

Arboretum Recordings, 411 South 11th Street, 3rd Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19147

MEATJACK - TRUST, CD Meatjack or meathead? These dudes showed up for Tool school but unfortunately Korn was substitute teaching that day. (And if that weren't bad enough, they only got a C-.) That abrasive guitar work will try to draw you in at times, but it can't save the whole. I'll never understand why CD's like this come to this magazine. Doesn't *Flipside* smile on such metal styling? (RB)
At a Loss P.O. Box 3597, Annapolis, MD 21403

MECHAKUCHA — ONE MILLION SAFE HOURS, CD The debut release by this instrumental trio is a mostly mysterious affair that I can't seem to crack. I'm thinking it might work as background music while "Natural Born Killers" plays with the TV volume off. (DJK)
Frenetic Records, PO Box 640434, San Francisco, CA 94164-0434

MESSYHEADS — I'M NO ONE, CD Messyheads are a top-notch pop-rock trio with members from the USA and Ireland that call NYC home. Great, smooth vocals and guitar hooks abound on this three-song EP. It's probably just a matter of time before we've all heard of them. They've got the chops. Go Messyheads! (DJK)
Snub! 255 West 15th Street, Suite 9, New York, NY 10011

MIKE ILL — THE SEDUCTION OF SARAH SAHONIE, CD Okay, this CD comes to me with no information at all. No artwork, no insert, no hidden toy, nothing. There are 18 songs and the guy's name is Mike Ill, so I figure that this might be a funny little surprise. But no, this is 18 crappy, folksy songs with only an acoustic guitar accompaniment. This is the problem with DIY. Every boner out there with a guitar or harmonica or oboe thinks that they can do it themselves. Well they're wrong! And who is encouraging these people? Their friends deserve a shitty review too for saying, "Hey, that's really great" when they really should say, "Don't annoy me or anyone else with anymore of your boring crap music!" (NS)
No address, not that anyone would want it

THE MONOSTEREO - WILL BE IN ROOM 63, 7"

As lo-fi as lo-fi can get, this is an acoustic guitar and droning vocal affair. Four songs including one of vocals taped from a shower stall. On acid-washed green vinyl. Splendid! (DJK)

Sound Explorer, P.O. Box 1098, Benlomon, CA 95005

MY 3 SCUM - NIGHT OF THE LIVING SCUM, CD

This is great stuff. Horror Punkabilly at it's finest. With over a decade of music under their belts, My 3 Scum return from the grave again to bring forth their rockin' styling from beyond. Rockabilly has never sounded so good with blues drenched punk fucking rock. Even non-fans of Rockabilly would enjoy this release. This is full speed ahead, no frills, rock. I lack the words to express how refreshing this is. Dig up a copy now! (DM)

Eerie Records, www.eerierecords.com

NEW JERSEY JOYSTICK - NEW SONG FOR THE RIDE, CD

Melodic punk-style music that borders on depressing, but in a sort of good way. Think Plow United, but not as good. The songs are mostly fast with a few slow parts thrown in for feeling, Creep Records style if you know what I mean. They're somewhere between punk and "emo," what with the wimpy lyrics and the all-lowercase letters in the booklet. It has a very suburban-teenager feel to it. (BJM)

Annoyance PO Box 21, Bound Brook NJ 08805

NEW STATES - S/T, CD Four songs. Indie pop/rock going nowhere, completely unmemorable-features the smash hit "moad'Dib" (I couldn't make this shit up if I tried, people). The nightmare continues..(RP)

Speculation 4 Vetter Court N. Brunswick, NJ 08902

NEW WAYER - THE DEFEATED, CD Does Punk Planet have a policy that they will review anything that is sent to them? Because this is not punk. It is not even any vague form of rock. It is weird techno/electronic music with samples of people talking over it. As I am entirely unfamiliar with this genre I will refrain (for at least one review this issue) from saying "THIS SUCKS." (BJM)

Endearing Records, PO Box 69009, Winnipeg MB R3P 2G9, Canada

NO COMMENT - S/T, CD This is one of the missing links that pulls together the classic hardcore and original youth crew movements with the speed core or power violence stuff of today. The CD is a complete discography of this turn of the nineties band that features a member of Man is the Bastard. It is not as fast as the new stuff but it totally rocks. Absolutely essential. (CJK)

www.nocomment-hardcore.com

NOFX - THE DECLINE, CD I don't think NOFX still needs to send CD's out to be reviewed. Maybe if they sent them to Highlights or Fangoria or Cigar Aficionado Magazine, but really this is Punk Planet. "Gosh, this fella sure gave NOFX a good review I never heard them before, I better go check that crap out..." All that aside, this shit is fantastic. Sounds exactly like NOFX. Keep up the good work. (dc)

Fat Wreck Chords (CD doesn't have an address, I'm sure It's tough to find)

NOTORIUS, LA DANZA DEI NERVI, CD Italy's answer to Avail. Like Avail? You'll like this. Sounds just

like Avail, only with Italian lyrics. (AE)

Valium Records, 113 Nomentana, Rome 00161, Italy

ON POINT - DEMO, CDEP This is the best thing I got this month and it's only 4 minutes long! 4 songs in 4 minutes. On Point indeed! Well, I guess this is most of Ink & Dagger back when they were a straight edge band. The insert says that they were around between '87 and '89 and the lyrics obviously reflect that time period in hardcore. Every song is about the edge and the lyrics have references to the crew and sell outs and beatings. Lyrics like, "We'll beat you with your bong! Dirty stoner, you don't belong!" almost seem like a joke. Musically, however, On Point was a step above most bands of the time. You can definitely hear the Ink & Dagger sound in some of the slow parts. Ink & Dagger fans and hardcore kids will probably enjoy this, but 4 songs for \$6 is a bit steep. (NS)

CI, 739 Manor St., Lancaster, PA 17603

OPERATION: CLIFF CLAVIN - WHEN EVERYTHING'S BEEN SAID, 2xCD

Operation: Cliff Clavin were a punk band from Indiana that released When Everything's Been Said as a lazy effort to get their old, out of print stuff on the market. This isn't a discography, but with 78 songs it gives you plenty to get the idea across. Anthemic, heartfelt, and catchy, Operation: Cliff Clavin carry the feeling of Crimpshrine and Fifteen but with alternating male-female vocals. The positive attitudes are there and even though this stuff is played in a garage in every city across America, at least Operation: Cliff Clavin are decent and sincere. The two CDs are also accompanied by a 32 page zine that explains lyrics and outlines the band history. A good release for fans of the East Bay punk sound. (PB)

Traffic Violation, Box 772, East Setauket, NY 11733

OPHIL - LIVE, CD Don't you have to be famous to records a live CD? No, of course you don't check out OPHIL. Not only are they not famous, they are incompetent. It sounds like there are about thirty people at this show. On the picture inside the CD three people are looking away from the band and one girl has her arms folded. And here's why (if you have a heart condition or a history of medical problems you might want to have a seat because this could make you sick) OPHIL is a seven piece hardcore ska swing band with rap overtones and I'm not sure but I think they might be Christian. Are as pleased as I am? I don't think you can be, because I am currently listening to OPHIL. After I am done I think I might cut off my leg, yes that would be as much fun as listening to this CD. Self amputation. (dc)

Not Bad P.O. Box 7455 Boulder, CO 80302

PHYSICS - 2.7.98, CD Dooooo you wanna roll brah. Like my cuzin skored sum killlllll E from these jungle heads like last night at this fuckin hellllla tight warehouse party. Oh man I went into the trance room and just floated for like niiniine hours brah. And then like these three chicks came in and we just zooned out and shit was like hellla magnificent just feeling the music and the E take me to like a total higher level of consciousness. Dooooo do you know where I can buy a fluffy backpack made out of like a teddy bear.

Gold Standard Laboratories P.O. Box 11794

Berkeley, CA 94712-2794

PINHEAD CIRCUS - FALL IN LOVE ALL OVER AGAIN, CD Not necessarily a new release, Fall In Love

contains an out of print album, seven-inch, and nine unreleased tracks from this Colorado punk group. Raw, rough, and loud - Pinhead Circus are a punk band adapted for the Nineties. You know, the fast and snotty brand of punk that is filled with catchy hooks, pounding drums, and youthful vocals. An infectious album, but this stuff is much more striking live. (PB)

Soda Jerk, PO Box 4056, Boulder, CO 80306

PINEHURST KIDS - VIEWMASTER, CD

Hmmm...I think these guys would sound great live, but this CD isn't kicking my ass-crank the guitars next time and we'll see. In a certain context, this is almost like a more down-to-earth punk version of Bush or something-in fact I'm now pretty sure that the production is fucking these guys. Get them someone who knows how to bring out real raw power in a band and you'd have something. Interesting guitar parts which come naturally and aren't forced dynamics, which is also known as the 'emo disease', and extra points for including the lyrics. The vocals are kinda wimpy but again, I can see enjoying this in a live setting-kind of 120 Minutes but overall a thumbs up I'd say. The CD even looks like a Viewmaster reel! Bonus: exceptionally cute female bass player! Okay. (RP)

Four Alarm Records 660 West Lake Street Chicago, IL 60661

THE PINES OF ROME - ON ALL FOURS, CD Okay, for being an acoustic mellow band, the second song has great lyrics that took me off guard: *Fuck this city's cops / they fine you for parking in front of your own house / even when it's so cold you can't feel your life.* I hope I got that right. I don't know why that struck me as awesome, but it totally put me in a good mood. The Pines of Rome play very pretty songs about personal things. The layered guitars remind me a little of American Football, something in the way they slide their fingers on the strings. I think Pines doesn't flow or sound like AF otherwise though. Good lyrics accompany the singer's nice off-key voice well. I'd recommend this to anyone who really enjoys acoustic bands. (RE)

Corleone P.O. Box 606, Newport, RI 02840

THE POONANIES - S/T, CD This is pretty nondescript melodic punk rock by a bunch of kids who look like they're in high school. The band name is pretty high school too. (BJM)

Sniper Juice Records, c/o the Poonanies, PO Box 007, Park Ridge IL 60068

PROCESS IS DEAD/A DEATH BETWEEN SEASONS - SPLIT, 7" PID kick out two well-produced new school hardcore ragers which are thankfully more interested in going off than wallowing in slow mosh crap, too bad the vocals sound like a ten-year-old boy with his balls caught in a bear trap-oh yeah, check this lyrical brilliance out: "glass in the heel coincidentally happens again I missed another sunrise."-ten years ago these 90's sxe guys would have been Morrissey fans, I swear to fucking god. ADBS headed back to the basement with THREE, count em THREE vocalists growling and screeching over the top of a wall of guitar noise with drums that are alternately fast and slow and their lyrics are even more spellbinding: "Nike is closing in, yet we stand tall and proud, coated in shit and blood, coated in shit and blood." Frankly Mr. Shankly, I'm speechless. I'm kinda sur-

prised to see a crust band with a straight edge band but what-the-hell, they're both better than all that emo/indie shit I had to endure for this issue! (RP)

PID PO Box 159213 Nashville, TN 37215 // ADBS
c/o Paul Pieramico 1750 Empire Blvd. Webster, NY 14580

THE QUADRAJETS - WHEN THE WORLD'S ON FIRE, CD Alabama's finest southern rock - three guitar assault, the Quadrajets are back with a goddamn full length that screams of Southern Comfort. Almost two years after the release of their debut LP, "Pay the Deuce" the Quadrajets are back with a ten track attack. If you haven't seen these boys play their blend of Detroit Rock and Southern hospitality then you outta do it quick. The three guitars can be a bit much, but they are all about rock and roll and with help from grunge guru Jack Endino twisting the knobs on this one. The only band that can pull off members with too much facial hair. Hookers, and Hellcopters fans take note. (EA)

Estrus Records PO Box 2125 Bellingham, WA 98227

QUALM / MAIL ORDER CHILDREN - SPLIT, 7" Hmm. I'm trying to find the silver lining with this one. If you like fun, fast paced punk trying to play serious songs, you might like Qualm. Demo quality recordings ala Pinhead Circus in so many words. Mail Order Children play 3rd (or 4th, ...who knows, who cares) wave ska with the whole punk styling. Not bad quality, (not good either) but I just can't help but compare them to that punk/ska band from Florida that the kids love so much. However both of these bands both made this recording in late '97. I wonder if they're still around and/or gotten better? (DM)
Not Bad P.O. Box 7455, Boulder, CO 80302

QUALM - PUT 'ER THERE, CD Funny songs. Fast pop. Silly band photos. Samples from their favorite movies. Mandatory 80's cover track. Now I know what it was like to review music in 1994. (dc)
Not Bad Records, P.O. Box 7455, Boulder, CO 80302

RADIO BERLIN - SIBLING, CD Hey-here's something different. Four guys from Vancouver doing a cool punk/nowave/newwave/90's indie uhh.thing with tons of crazy keyboards, synth, guitars and five-minute songs that actually keep me interested. This is actually better because of the keyboards, which I would normally consider detrimental to most bands because I like that there's a lot going on at once. I think this could have come out of the UK twenty years ago and ended up as some sort of cult favorite. Yup, rawer production would have put this over the top but it's still alright. Nice change-of-pace. (RP)
Love Und Romance 4576 56A St. Delta BC V4K 3C6 Canada, eh!

R.A.P. - FOLLOW THE SUN, CD Polish reggae. Need I say more? (NS)
Nikt Nic Nie Wie, P.O. Box 53, 34-400 Nowy Targ, Poland

REAL ESTATE FRAUD - F-WORD, 7" It always amazes me that a band this great can exist and not be better known. Yet another fantastic batch of songs from these Minneapolis godsend hit vinyl. For those not in the know, Real Estate Fraud plays simple, no-frills punk with fierce

female vocals that will change your life. The lyrics are sarcastic as hell, and this record had me dancing all over my apartment like a fucking idiot. Get this 7"! (AE)

Nice and Neat Records, P.O. Box 14177,
Minneapolis, MN 55414

REALITY - YOUNG DRUNK PUNKS, CD This is a discography of material of the British band, Reality, from 1982-1985. This is quite the collection of catchy tunes from this ultimate opening band from this era including a 7", an EP, live and demo sessions. However the recordings are lacking in quality at times. The opening tracks sound as if they were taken from the actual 7". Some of the other tracks are of a poorer quality with distant sounding, unbalanced or deteriorating recordings. However, the majority of this CD is pretty decent. Considering how old these recordings are, they are quite good especially compared to some "professional" live recordings I've heard before. Any fan of early UK punk (Subhumans, Chelsea) should enjoy this collection of songs, which is a small, but existing chapter of Britain's early punk scene. (DM)
Overground Records, P.O. box 1NW, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE99 1NW, UK

THE REAL KIDS - DOWN TO YOU, CD This is a four-song sampler from their first full-length in 20 years due out soon. Pure pop perfection. It's just as simple as that. (DJK)
TKO Records, PMB #103, 4104 24th Street, San Francisco, CA 94114

THE REFORMED - THE DAYS OF OUR YOUTH, CD The Reformed are living in the past, taking the influences of their inspirators and resurrecting a played-out sound. The hardcore-influenced Oi sound of The Trouble is here, as well as the pissy, obnoxious vocals of Kill Your Idols and the fast, catchy hardcore punk of H2O. Also present are the melodies and back-ups of Agnostic Front and other NYHC groups. Fairly monotonous and well-trodden ground, though. (PB)
Elevator Music, PO Box 1502, New Haven, CT 06505

RINGWORM - LAST CALL IN THE FREE WORLD, CD This is pretty standard punk. Fast, pissed off, normal, and boring. It's a formula and it works and there are a million Ringworms out there. Okay. They cover Black Flag and sample the movie "The Warriors" which is cool. But a sample at the end of the CD repeats the words "to beer" for THIRTY-FIVE MINUTES which is not cool. That's a brilliant use of space dudes. I bet you dudes love beer. (RE)
Rat Town P.O. Box 50803, Jax Beach, FL 32240

SCATTERGUN REFLEX - LAUGHING AT A DEAD MAN, CD Some albums just shouldn't be as long as they are. This is a good example of one of those. Too many songs that sound too similar make this a release that I'm not going to spend more than a couple listens on ever. It would have been more successful as a single. This three piece place jerky, mathy instrumental rock that doesn't go anywhere or change enough to keep you interested for long. I would have liked to hear some vocals over this. Some well-placed screaming could have helped this record tons. Some bands can manage to stay instrumental and interesting at the same time. But not this band. (RE)
Lazer Trax Record 3200 S. Cooper, Suite 105
Arlington, TX 76105

SCOTT RITCHER - S/T, CD This is the solo record by Scott Ritcher, the singer from Metroshifter and all around good Louisville guy. If you haven't picked up the early Metroshifter albums, you are missing out on a couple of the greater albums of the early to mid 90's. Metroshifter, since then have mellowed a bit, and so has Scott. These songs are all acoustic, all by himself. His singing voice takes a bit to get used to on this record, it's rough but somewhat appealing. The album isn't something that will appeal to the masses. Pick this up if you're a fan or just into acoustic music. I guess I should mention that he covers "Baby one more time" by Brittany Spears. Yeah. (RE)

SEA MONKEYS - SECRET SIGN, CD Yes, there are still great bands in N.Y.C. The Sea Monkeys play Ramones-ish high-energy punk with lots of 50's and 60's rock influence. I bet they're stellar live. "Secret Sign" is a can't go wrong release. (AE)

Eerie Records, P.O. Box 11365, Erie, PA 16514

SEPPUKU - THE AWESOME HOUSES OF EARTH'S INNOCENTS, CD This is a very different release from spectra sonic sound. I was expecting more of the good post-punk that they have been known for, and this is the furthest from it. This band reminds me of where Joan of Arc would like to be. The sound is sparse and minimal with lots of feedback. The music structure is almost absent, it feels improvised and ill-planned. I understand it is a project or experimentation but nothing holds it together. If you are a fan of very minimal scattered instrumental music, then this might be for you. Or if you are a fan of music that is good for nap time, this is for you. (RE)

Spectra Sonic Sound, P.O. Box 80067 Ottawa, ON K1S 5N6 Canada

THE SERVICE - WHO'S CRIMINAL?, CD The first great skinhead album of the new millennium is here!!! Milwaukee's The Service play contemporary Oi in the vein of the Dropkick Murphys or Anti-Heros. The lyrics are unusually personal for the genre, and judging by all of the prison and criminal defense lingo, someone in this band has had the misfortune of going through "the system" a few times. I've been lucky enough to see them play and can say with confidence that this album is every bit as fun as seeing them live. Support these guys. (AE)

GMM Records, P.O. Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333

SEVEN DAYS OF SAMBARA - A REASON TO SING, CD Uggghhh.... The best thing about this CD is the irony with which these guys titled it. The music here is what I believe people now refer to as "screamo," a term combining two of the worst elements in music, screaming and emo. Yes, fellas, your CD is a reason to sing, not scream. Whatever happened to the lost art of singing? Anyway, as far as I can tell, this sounds just like the other bands in this genre. This music seems to be quite popular these days. These guys have it all, from the artsy, hand made CD case, to the PC lyrics (with full explanation, for those who aren't into interpreting the meaning of lyrics for themselves), to the lowercase script font used on the inside of the jacket. I find more irony in the quest of all these bands to be original, when, for example, by making hand-made booklets, they are doing the same as all of the other bands who sound just like them. The genre seems to breed one style

of artistic taste. Maybe they should spend more time on the music... (BJM)

EA Records, 201 E. Fullerton, Elmhurst IL 60126

SHOGUN - EVERYTHING I LOVE KILLS ME IN THE END, CD In case you have never heard mundane hardcore music before, here is what Shogun sounds like: (screaming like you caught your hand in a car door and the car started to drive away) "BAUUUGHGHHG AH BLEG AH BLEG AHHHH BLEG MO MO MO BAUUUGHGHHG AH BLEG AHHHHHHHHHHH MO. -pause- twinkling guitar-tappy soft drum brushing- sappy personal lyrics -pause UUUGHGHHHHHHHHHHHEEEEEEEYAAHHHHHHH AH BLEG AH BLEG MO MO MO" and so on and so forth for years to come. I'm sure their friends like to get up on stage and sing along with them as well. Does it really even matter what they are singing about anymore? (dc)

Not Bad P.O. Box 7455 Boulder, CO 80302

SHUTTLECOCK - THIS IS THE HOUR OF LEAD, CD Abstract, post-grunge rock. One song title sums this for me in "Gravity (displacement of order and time)". I really have nothing more to say about this EP (DJK)

Iron Compass Records, 3751 Elmhurst Road, Toledo, OH 43613

SKULL KONTROL, ZZZZZ..., CD Fast eclectic tunes with male + female vocals. Very catchy, and despite the title you won't get any "z's" listening to this one. (AE)

Touch and Go, P.O. Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625

SLAVES - THE DEVILS PLEASURES, CD The second record from Slaves doesn't disappoint. Slaves, a band comprised of all the members of the VSS minus the vocalist, take you on a ride through the land of post-hardcore turned goth on this record. I wouldn't be surprised to find out that Bauhaus is one of these guys favorite band, if you know what I'm saying. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, as Slaves make it work for them, straddling the line between goth and post punk meandering, resulting in an enjoyable 10 song full length CD. (MT)

Troubleman Unlimited, 16 Willow St., Bayonne, NJ 07002.

THE SLAVES/NOTORIOUS - SPLIT 7" The Slaves have been around for a couple of years belting out their post-VSS ultra pretentious rock and roll. I can't say that I'm entirely against it, but can't say that I totally support it either. In any case, as long as they are having fun, I guess that's all that matters. Naked people imagery and all. What's up with that? Notorious are, I'm assuming, from Italy and are in the same vein as the Slaves. I think this record might be super limited. I know one of the most recent Slaves singles is anyway. Anyway, this is a pretty all right record, that I won't be getting rid of any time soon. (RE)

Valium Via Nomentana, 113-00161 Roma, Italy

SMACKIN' ISIAH - THE WAY TO A GIRL'S HEART IS THROUGH HER BOYFRIEND'S STOMACH, CD Yoo-Hoo's "Battle of the Unsigned Bands" third place winner last year. Hardcore from New Bedford, MA. Endorsed by Ron Jeremy (yeah, the porn star). Includes a (cliché) answering machine message. Only boring people get bored so let's just say I wasn't positively impressed. (DJK)

Tank P.O. Box 40009, New Bedford, MA 02744

SOUTHPACIFIC - CONSTANCE, CD Atmospheric guitar mood music? More or less, no less, instrumentals. I think someone tried to sing on track 7. More or less, good, interesting background music. Sounds like a film score, except that films don't have soundtracks anymore, just cross promoted bullshit comps. Could easily be played at an art show. But, hey, I like singing. The only instrumental album that I will ever rave about is "Metal Machine Music". Please touch me. (AS)

Turnbuckle Records, 163 3rd Ave., pmb 435, New York, NY 10003

SPARECHANGE? - HAS SINCERITY GONE OUT OF STYLE?, CD North Canton, Ohio's Sparechange blast out seventeen heartfelt songs about internal turmoil that are all more or less set to a hardcore beat. But at seventeen songs some variety would be a treat. Does any one own any Led Zeppelin albums? Keep the listeners guessing please! Has sincerity gone out of style? Who knows? Can some band please sing about the things that they do behind their parents backs as opposed to sounding like a psychiatric session in a confessional. Pretty decent. I kept thinking of JChurch? (AS)

Sparechange?, 8164 Burkey Rd. NW, N. Canton, OH 44720

STARMARKET - SUNDAY'S WORST ENEMY, CD This is a very confusing release because from the cover, it looks like they will be a fun pop band. No one would think that a band with a large illustration of a rubber duck in bath water would sound like a cross between Quicksand, Braid, and Jimmy Eat World. Pretty solid rock from this band on Pop Kid. I wouldn't rush out to pick this up, just because you've heard it all before. Borderline radio-friendly post-rock, a couple of guitars and lots of personal lyrics. A pretty decent release. (RE)

Pop Kid Records, 16 Raleigh Ln. Wayne, NJ 07470

SUBTERRANEAN KIDS- 85-88 THE HARDCORE YEARS, CD A rad old school hardcore band from Spain. This compilation was done in some of the best taste I've seen in a while. It's packaged like a hard cover book and the layout is amazing. This is the first time I've heard these guys and they totally rock. It's always a treat to hear music in other languages. I'm glad I got this, now I'm curious to hear more bands from Spain. (FH)

Tralla APDO. CO. 08080 Barcelona Spain

SUGARFIX, DISCONNECTED!, CD NOFX ripoff bands sound better in foreign languages, don't they? Like Wizo did in German, Sugarfix puts a new twist on a familiar style by being French. Actually, I think at least some of the lyrics are in English. In any case, this is solid fast poppy punk. (AE)

Lollipop Records, 35 ch. de la Nerthe, 13016 Marseille, France

SUMMER JACK- THREE CHORDS AND THE TRUTH, CD Even though the music on the album was a bit too melodic and fat records-ish for my taste, I like the title so much I almost want to go home and snuggle with it. I mean, Three Chords and the Truth, that's brilliant! This album did have one anthem on it I could see the teens across the nation bobbing their heads to. Fluorescent Lights is the anti-work anthem if ever there was one. (FH)

Good Thief PO Box 4916 Boise, ID 83711

SUTEK CONSPIRACY, CD It's a budget Born Against, whom I've also never understood. With time, production, and increased playing Sutek Conspiracy could be contenders. For now, I only have a lyric booklet with song explanations that are Xeroxed and hard to read. Six songs in all and hopefully priced at a street punker's budget. (AS)

1507 Main St., Lafayette, IN 47905

SWINGIN' UTTERS/ YOUTH BRIGADE, SPLIT CD Admiringly, not as generic as I thought it was going to be, but still pretty. Both of these bands are popular, so it doesn't matter what I say. You'll buy it anyway. Straight forward pop punk with the Swingin' Utters sounding more pop and Youth Brigade sounding more punk. (FH)

BYO PO Box 67A64 Los Angeles, CA 90067

SYSTEM & STATION- PROSPECTS OF LIVING DAILY, CD Unfortunately, in the world of reviewing records you usually don't have enough time to sit down, play an album several times, take it in and base a proper judgment about it. There have been a number of times where my immediate impression of an album wasn't always correct and I found out later that I actually loved it instead of the opposite. I have a feeling that this 5 song EP could be one of those albums. At first listen, I didn't feel that this emo/indie rock band was breaking any new ground. My hope, though, is that on future listens my love for this album will grow. The music sounds a bit like this: kind of soft and quiet with a bout of rage here there, throw in the occasional cow bell, and then end it in a climax of noise and propulsion. (FH)

Mafia Money PO Box 8562 Madison, WI 53708

THISTLE - SEA LEGS, CD Six songs of swirled guitar alt rock reminding me of Oasis as all these bands do, but less catchy. Good production, sound, playing, etc. But I'm looking for something to sing along with, not fall asleep too. There are a lot of bands like this, maybe I'm just old? (AS)

Tiberius 4280 Catalpa Dr., Independence, KY 41051

TIME HAS COME - S/T, 7" Youth crew hardcore with vibrant guitars, manic shouting, and aggressive back-ups. Blistering speed that is relentless, a very hyper version of its predecessors. This whole genre is still alive, but the progression seems slow. Time Has Come may be heavier, faster, and louder than, say, Wide Awake, but not drastically enough to keep it from all sounding the same. (PB)

CI Recordings, 739 Manor Street, Lancaster, PA 17603

TISSURA ANI/PIATA STRONA SWIATA - SPLIT CD 2 Polish bands (I assume from the label's address) playing different 2 different styles. Tissura Ani play rock music with female vocals. Sometimes there's this annoying jangly guitar and sometimes it's kind of heavy. I picture music videos with them running through dark forests looking confused. Next. Piata Strona Swiata sound like they could have been on Victory or Equal Vision in the early 90's. Except that they sing in Polish or whatever. Well played mid paced hardcore, but pretty boring. And the vocals sound like they're barked out. (NS)

Nikt Nic Nie Wie, P.O. Box 53, 34-400 Nowy Targ, Poland

THE TONE/THE URCHIN - SPLIT 7" I've wanted to get a Snuffy Smile release for a long time since it seems to have a good track record. And this is a good introduction

to the label. The 'Tone are supposedly ex members of some known English bands. How's that for research? I've heard comparisons to the Clash and I definitely hear that since my roommate likes the Clash a lot. I'm not a big Clash fan, but I like this. Catchy English punk with good musicianship. The second song even has a ska feel that isn't too annoying. Good show! The Urchin are really good too. An early Snuff or Weston feel to their poppy punk. I was tapping my toe to their 2 songs. Is there a U.S. distributor for Snuffy Smile? (NS)
 Snuffy Smile, 4-24-4-302 Daizawa, Setagaya-Ku, Tokyo 155-0032 Japan

TRANSITIONAL - THE PEOPLE VS. TRANSITIONAL, CD The little type in the booklet really makes it difficult to read all the new-wave lyrics, but I squinted and prevailed. Remember to always make your type bigger than you think when you use white type on black because ink bleeds when printed on certain papers...yeah. How do I make the transition to the review now? With much skill, I just did. Anyway, these kids rock the new wave scene. There are so many bands coming out of the west coast (and everywhere else probably) right now-doing this, it's hard to keep them all straight. White belts, black pants, keyboards, and hero-in chic...I love it all. Sexy girl vocals over catchy keyboard hooks and quirky guitar parts. Transitional isn't doing anything new, but they're good at doing it anyway. I wouldn't be surprised if this gets lost among the rest of records out there. The problem is that there aren't any real stand-outs on this record. They are doing what they know, doing it pretty well, but not enough to really make me love it. (RE)
 Sound on Sound, 106-B Prospect St Willimantic, CT 06226

TRASH BRATS - MUST BE THE COCAINE, 7" The A side original, "Must Be The Cocaine", is a great rockin' tune sounding as if Aerosmith played punk rock and was shackled up with the Lazy Cowgirls. Funny, insensitive, and somehow fitting lyrics combine to make a near classic track. The flip side is a good cover of the actual classic Zero Boy's, "Civilization's Dying". For those that have heard some of their earlier recordings, this has a great punk rock feel and production to it. Recommended, buy now, as they need the money to buy more dresses and makeup. (AS)

I-94 Recordings, PO Box 44763, Detroit, MI 48244

TURING MACHINE - A NEW MACHINE FOR LIVING, CD Hey kids have you heard the news? Emo is last year's style, now it's 2000 and all the cool people are talking about the latest musical trend "weird shit". That's right, weird shit, the kind of music that breaks down walls and refuses to be classified. The kind of music that people who own recording studios and large collections of jazz albums really love. The kind of music that you can't talk shit about because you probably don't understand it. Turing Machine is weird shit. A basic blank instrumental CD with obscure song titles, awkward breaks, and the occasional apex twin-style remix fusion. Not weird enough to blow the roof off your house but just weird enough to make the average punk boycott their show. (dc)

Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810

UI - THE IRON APPLE, CD Here we have a mini CD of instrumental noodling with some ambient bits, some

electronic bits, and many, many non-interesting bits. This is basically 2 songs re-mixed a couple of times each to make a 5 song EP. It's very repetitious, almost to the point of being monotonous. (MT)

Southern P.O. Box 577375, Chicago, IL 60657.

UKLA - LTD., CD Anyone who was familiar with the Cambridge/ Boston Punk scene during the 90's should have at least heard of UKLA. These boys had been playing for quite a while in Mass. with their token style of catchy and at times, offbeat style. Their music, like their live show, captured a sense of fun and energy that was very intoxicating and easy to get into. One refreshing aspect of the band was that they were a punk rock band, but lacked the traditional sound of the more popular styles of the time (no Epitaph, Fat, etc. HERE). UKLA's sound was more similar to other bands of Boston's past like Mission of Burma and Moving Targets. Beside 16 tracks of UKLA, you get 7 tracks of past band efforts under the names of the Gasoline Gang and Green Panic. Not bad at all. (DM)

Fan Attic Records, P.O. Box 391494, Cambridge, MA 02139-0015

THE VEXING - S/T, 7" I knew immediately from the design and name that I would love this band and I was right. I knew it would sound like a cross between the Cranium, NOU, and Antioch Arrow and it does. So is this all good? It depends. Are you satisfied with hearing the similar sound re-done a lot? In some cases, I am. In this case, I am. If you're into the quirky new-wave post rock stylish arty sounds, then I totally recommend this record to you. Don't expect to be blown away by this, but expect to be satisfied with a good record, that's all. It's a nice addition to the old collection. It's limited to 450, so act fast or something. (RE)

N. Vocoder P.O. Box 13112, Philadelphia, PA 19101

THE VICELORDS - ROCK 'N ROLL EPIDEMIC, CD The first of the four songs on this CD is great. I mean really great. But the other three are lame! What happened? Femmy punk that reminds me of the Trash Brats. Too bad the other three songs weren't as good as the first. This band has potential, though. (AE)

P.O. Box 2503, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

THE VOGUE, S/T 7"

I played this record several times at both 33 and 45 speed and honestly have no idea what speed it's meant to be played at. Need I say more? (DJK)

Made In Mexico, 1011 Boren Ave., #906, Seattle, WA 98104

VOORHEES - FIREPROOF, 7" I was curious about this band, and my interest was peaked. Not anymore. Straight-forward run-of-the-mill hardcore from England. I would feel a little strange even giving that "they're good at what they do" schtick. Slick gruntage. (RB)

Chainsaw Safety Records, P.O. Box 260318, Bellrose, NY 11426-0318

VUE - THE DEATH OF A GIRL, CD Formerly the Audience, Vue rocks out on this five-song release with a mid-tempo organ and guitar attack. Three of the songs are brand new and promised not to be on their upcoming Sup Pop LP and two of the tunes are from the out of print "Young Soul" 7". Vue has a more distorted view of the

garage than most of their peers and are in line with what Sub Pop is trying to do- signing more rock bands and all. They have more of a new wave vibe than the hard rock of Nebula or the Hellacopters, though. I would predict that they are going to hugely popular but the name of the group is so terrible that I can not. Change the name again and keep on rocking. (CJK)

Gold Standard Laboratories, P.O. Box 11794, Berkeley, CA 94712-2794

THE WEIGH DOWN - S/T, CD I wanted to come up with a new classification in rock. I needed a new name for the bands that are second generation Fugazi sound alike modern soft then hard whisper to a scream dynamics with their detuned guitars and straight up out of tune vocals. I did not think I should call it college rock as I think that most college students listen to a Dave Matthews/Phish group of records or a Limp Bizkit/Korn group with all of the associated classic bands and records in the genre. No, this is liberal arts rock. The type of rock that you would find at Oberlin College here in Ohio (the heart of it all) or any other small progressive liberal arts school around the country. I will bet you money that the dudes in The Weigh Down wear glasses and sweaters. They are liberal arts rock- the first band to be classified as such- and that is all I am going to say about this record. (CJK)

Garbage Czar P.O. Box 207129, New Haven, CT 06520

WELSH, KEITH - SLOW DIVE, CD Keith, you're not going to get any ladies whining like that, dude. Maybe just some lame emo girls, and you don't want that. Who am I kidding? You'd love that! A Floridian man with emotions and a guitar. I've got to turn this stuff down lower when I review it, I think my neighbors are plotting to have me carted off to the loony bin for depression. (RB)

brave noise records, P.O. box 2268, Brandon, FL 33509-2268

WHIPPASNAPPA - INDESTRUCTIBLE, CD To look at it it's the most pathetic laid-back California happiness diarrhea you'd ever set eyes on. Look a little closer and you find these pretty boys is from jolly old England. And the sound, you ask? To hear it it's the most pathetic laid-back California happiness diarrhea you'd ever soil your ears with. Comes with a heartwarming letter begging for help to "further their careers" and "take it to the next level." Yuck. (RB)
 Snappa Recording Company, PO Box 203, Cheltenham, GL50 2YB, England

WORLD INFERNO FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY - IT'S PUMPKIN TIME, 7" This shit is too dang nutty for me. I like bands that combine one or two or three different sounds. These guys have about fifteen. Zany music for kids with eclectic taste. (dc)

Gern Blandsten P.O. Box 356 River Edge, NJ 07661

THE WORTHLESS - I'M STILL HAVING FUN, 7" This record continues in Taang's more recent street punk/oi direction. The Worthless play catchy street punk similar to early 80's punk. I thought of Social D. a couple times. Even Rancid's slower stuff, without the bass madness. Duane Peters produced it and they thank the U.S. Bombs, so you should have a good idea what this is like. Done before, but done well. (NS)

Taang!, 706 Pismo Ct., San Diego, CA 92109

WRETCH LIKE ME - CALLING ALL CARS, CD Apparently these fellows don't like the cops and they are "gonna show the pigs" and "stick it to the man". You police officers better watch out because if you thought civil rights organizations, politicians, and protest marches were hard to deal with, you haven't met Wretch Like Me. Nothing scarier to a globally dominant law enforcement agency than five guys who play bad punk music. This shit starts like gruff descendants and ends on a more harmonizing sing songy note. Two songs with the word "rock" in the title, one song called "Happy Song" and one called "Furburger". A fairly mixed message. (dc)

Owned And Operated Recordings, P.O. Box 36
Fort Collins, CO 80522

THE ZERO SQUAD/POTBELLY - SPLIT 7" With songs like "Six Pack Love," "Nymphomaniac," "Go Die" and "Cunt," I think you know what to expect from these bands. The Zero Squad side begins with a beer can opening (or is that soda?) and proceeds into territory covered by early Guttermouth. Snotty SoCal sounding punk. Potbelly is similar, but the singer sounds a little angrier. Fast and probably drunk punk. If you like your punk fast, your beer cold and your women easy, then come and get it. (NS)
Useless, 6523 California Ave. SW, PMB #609,
Seattle, WA 98136-1879

V/A - ANGRY PUNK FOR URBAN SKUNK, CD I'm not sure what the purpose of this compilation is. It is a mix of mostly Oi/street punk bands, some of whom are still around, some who recently broke up, and some who are from 20 years ago. Seventeen songs, most of which are previously released. Bands include Anti-Heros, Boils, Bomb Squadron, Templars, Varukers, and Violent Society. This is probably a decent comp if you like the genre. One annoyance: recording quality varies from track to track, and the tracks are all at different volume levels, so you have to keep changing the volume on the stereo. (BJM)
45 Revolutions PO Box 2568, Decatur GA 30031

V/A - BETTER THAN SEVENS, CD This is the cost-effective collection of eight 7" recordings for 8 bands on one CD. However that leaves me with 8 reviews, short ones. Commercials-Early Fat Wreck Chords style like 88 Fingers but with some emotions. Tinkle-Like early Green Day with a ska part or two. Young Hasselhoffs-Like Tinkle but better without the ska part. Heft-Punk ska sounding like Less Than Jake (but not as good) that likes to knock on those backpack kids at shows and the Bouncing Souls. Abducted-Ramones revisited for the first half, then some good catchy punk tunes. Goons- Great aggro skate rock. Vapids-I like the Queers! Santa's Dead-Kinda catchy without a lot distortion punk, but needs some work. There could be a promising future for some of these bands. However, I think I would prefer actual 7" records. (DM)
Reinforcement Records, 96 Ehert Ave., Harrington Park, NJ 07640

V/A- GREETINGS FROM THE WELFARE STATE, CD I've never really been a fan of comps, and this does absolutely nothing to change my mind. On the cover it says that it's a comp of Britain's best punk rock, but if this is it, then Britain, I'm sorry. I didn't realize generic punk rock was so big over there. For those who care, the comp

includes a few bigger names: Gooper Patrol, Consumed, Citizen fish, etc. (FH)

BYO Records PO Box 67A64 Los Angeles, CA
90067 USA

V/A - HERE WE ARE NOWHERE, CD This label seems to have something to do with New Red Archives, but I'm not sure what since there's no info other than a web site and damned if I know how to use these new fangled computer machines. 29 songs of mostly working class punk on this thing. You got Anti-Flag, Dead Lazlo's Place, Swingin' Utters, Link 80, The Receivers, Badtown Boys, Subincision, Turbo A.C.s and lots more. This isn't a bad compilation, but I can't say that I really liked any of these songs. That's just me though. I don't like ketchup in my macaroni either. I'm sure that some segment of the punk population will eat this up though. Like they eat up macaroni with ketchup. (NS)

Substandard

V/A - LETTERS FROM PUNKSVILLE, CD This collection of tunes is brought to you by the boyz and girlz from Reinforcement and Umbilical Records. This is a pretty good comp of tunes. It's not too poppy, or snotty, or tough. It's right in the middle of it all. Some joke tunes, some sing-a-longs, but an overall, better than good, collection of bands. Featured bands are the Undead, Big Wig, Mohawk Barbie, Propagandhi, Moral Crux, Anti-Flag, Shaft, Gob, Ann Beretta, and the Weakerthans among 22 other bands. To the best of my knowledge, the majority of the songs are previously released but still worth checking out. (DM)
Reinforcement Records, 96 Ehert Ave., Harrington Park, NJ 07640

Umbilical Records, P.O. Box 31, Belle Mead, NJ
08502

V/A - MANIFESTO: AN INFERNAL RACKET SAMPLER, CD 15 songs from 15 brutal hardcore bands like CAVITY and MEATJACK. Lots of screaming and intensity. Unlike most compilations, this one consistently held my interest. If you're into the heavier strains of hardcore, you'll love this. (AE)

Infernal Racket Records, P.O. Box 4641, Bethlehem, PA 18018

V/A - MY SO-CALLED PUNK LIFE, CD This is a huge (thirty bands) compilation of many name (Teen Idols, Nobodys, Boris the Sprinkler, Pink Lincolns, The Smugglers, et. al.) pop punk (not my thing) acts whose names I have seen in punk rock fanzines (MRR, Filpside, PP) and have always wanted to check out (not really) but I was not going to spend the dime (definitely not). All of the music sound similar (read: identical) but I guess it serves its purpose (none) as an intro to the genre (lame). (CJK) (rockers)
Melted Records, 21-41 34th Ave., Suite 10A, Astoria, NY 11106

V/A - NO BORDERS, CD The cover of this CD says, "A Collection of Japanese & American Hardcore." But you know what? There's a band from Australia on here! What gives? Anyway, 18 bands from the U.S. and Japan (and...) playing fast melodic hardcore or NY style hardcore. One band is obviously trying to sound like later Bad Brains, with the singer trying to impersonate HR's odd vocal range. The "bigger" names on here are Fury 66,

SOIA, Snapcase, Shutdown, Decay, Kid Dynamite, Grey Area, Indecision and 88 Fingers Louie (with their most hardcore sounding song yet). And for the most part, these bands provide the best songs. So if you need some unreleased songs from those bands or want to check out some Japanese hardcore, this is the disc for you. (NS)

Suburban Home, P.O. Box 40757, Denver, CO 80204

V/A - PUT SOME PUSSY IN YOUR PUNK, CD Okay, we get 15 girl bands and like most compilations this suffers from too many throw away tracks that can't be bought elsewhere. I understand its point and personally I have never had a problem finding great "girl" bands whether it was 20 years ago - Kleenex, Slits, Rezillos (kinda), to currents found on this disc Loudmouths or Foxations. This is just another compilation that separates women and men. (EA)

On the Rag PO Box 251 Norco, CA 91760-0251

V/A - SELF DE-CONSTRUCTION BENEFIT COMPILATION, CD This is a benefit comp for organizations ranging in utility from the commendable Food Not Bombs to the embarrassingly unquestioned anti-speech Anti-Racist Action. It costs \$6.66 (good one, guys) and comes with a 48 page booklet including a political essay and lyrics. The 27 songs are from some of today's better "big" bands (like THE UNSEEN and I FARM) and from some of today's better lesser-known bands (like SPRAINED ANKLE). Way, WAY above average for a comp these days. (AE)

Underworld Records, 10738 Millen Av., Montreal
(Quebec), H2C 2E6, Canada

V/A - THE SOUND AND THE FURY, CD O.K., I admit it, I don't know much about hardcore. I only know a handful of names. Recently I've been getting more and more into it, so this comp couldn't have come at a better time. As you may have guessed, it's a hardcore comp filled with. As far as I can ascertain, pretty good hardcore bands. Good for beginners. (FH)

Red Star Records 762 Upper James St. Suite 335
Hamilton, ON Canada L9C3A2

V/A, SWINGIN' UTTERS AND YOUTH BRIGADE - THE BYO SPLIT SERIES VOLUME II, CD If you're unfamiliar with these two bands then you've been hunkered in your Y2K bunker way too long. Delivering six songs each this is simply some of the very best punk has to offer. Glorious. (DJK)

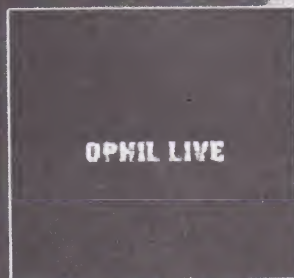
BYO P.O. Box 67A64, Los Angeles, CA 90067

V/A - THIS IS BAD TASTE VOL. 3, CD 26 songs from this Swedish label's roster and 3 previously released "guest tracks" from the Hard-Ons, Chixdiggitt and the Weakerthans. It's good to see that Bad Taste has bands with a variety of musical styles. Pop punk, hardcore and emo bands are all accounted for. They're not all that good, but it's nice to see a little variety. The best songs on here are the unreleased All Systems Go song, the 2 Intensity songs (old school hardcore similar to No For An Answer), 2 songs by The Pricks (fast Grimple-like punk) and the Hard-Ons song (which was originally released more than 10 years ago. With the mixed bag of styles going on, I doubt most people need this. (NS)
Bad Taste, Stora Sodergatan 38, S - 222 23 Lund, Sweden

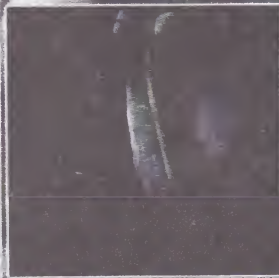
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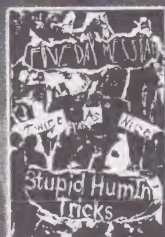
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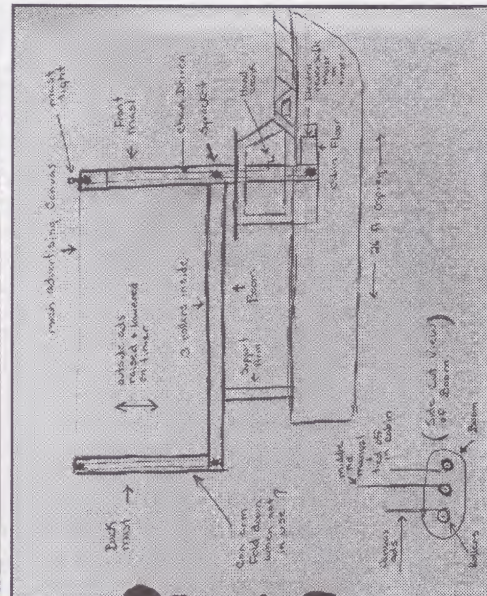
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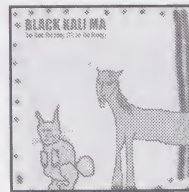


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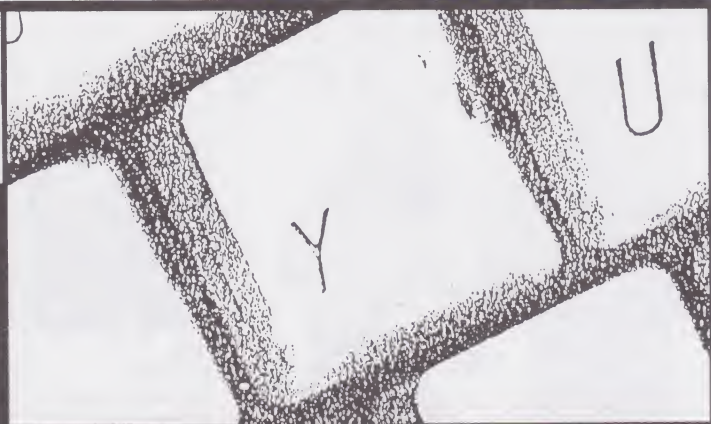
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PAPER ZINES



97218 #4: Mostly razor, some barbed

Twenty-eight photos of razor and/or barbed wire fences. I won't claim to be a photography critic. I can say that all of the photos are of the same size, orientation, and placement on the page. I don't even know if I would recommend this for photography students. It doesn't seem to be saying much, and if it is, it's saying the same thing twenty-eight times. (RB)
\$3, P.O. Box 14235, Portland, OR 97293

97218-Oregon Coast #5

This contains one black & white photograph per page of a cow or bull standing in a field. No captions. Is this a single's guide for animal fuckers in the Pacific Northwest? Stupidity and lameness beyond words. (RP)
\$3 (HAHAHAHA!!!!!!) PO Box 14235 Portland, OR 97293

Abus Dangereux, Face #63, Octobre 1999

If I could read French I'd definitely make this magazine a regular part of my literary diet. This issue with glossy cover features T.V. Killers, Fugazi, June of 44, Sugarman 3, Go-Betweens, Polar, Converge and Eggstone. The review section includes new offerings from the Aluminum Group, The Beta Band, Chemical Brothers, John Cougar Concentration Camp, The Birthday Party, Fluck, Melvins, Nadine, 7 Seconds, Tricky and about 100 more. The mag also provides a promotional six-song CD with music from Eggstone, Willard Grant Conspiracy, Mocket, Sugarman 3, Polar and Knut and is all yours for just 25f. (DJK)

Abus Dangereux, BP 15, 33031 Bordeaux Cedex, France

Aesthetic Number 1

A while back, Punk Planet did a graphic design issue. It was easily my favorite issue since this publication started. It opened more than a few doors for me. I guess I am not alone as readysat*AESTHETIC is claiming to be dedicated to the dual pursuits of music and graphic design. It is a nice looking zine- maybe a bit too clean with the standard punk content. I have go to tell you, I would really be hip to more zines if they just left the whole music thing at home. readysat*AESTHETIC shines with some Y2K stuff and a fascinating interview with the current James Bond franchise writer Raymond Benson. That's more like it. I am too bored with the whole punk/emo/indie thing to read another word but, thankfully, there are other topics to scribble on. Please find more of them.

8 1/2 X 5 1/2. Copied. Many pages. (CJJK)
\$1.77. P.O. Box 91, Madison, WI 53701-0091

Annoyance Zine Issue #20

A hard to read, cutesy, personal type zine is what you get when you buy the latest Annoyance zine from your neighborhood's small press coop/radical newsstand. What your neighborhood does not have a small press coop/radical newsstand? Oh, too bad. Annoyance Zine has a reverse 5 1/2 X 8 1/2 layout that is interesting but it has novelty fonts all over the background pictures that leave little distinction between the two. Visually- it is a mess. The writing is that false George Tabb styled innocence that you find way too many times in punk rock. Top Twenty pop punk records of all time, interviews, record reviews and personal observations are the content. 8 1/2 X 5 1/2. Copied. 54 pages. (CJJK)

\$1. P.O. Box 21, Bound Brook, NJ 08805

Ben #7

Subtitled "Salmon Boon, Master Fisherman" this issue of Ben is a short, rather random comic about a guy who finds adventure when he decides to take a long lunch break. Breaking from his routine, Ben kicks political figures, stumbles upon Salmon Boon practicing his casting, and runs into a reporter who is trying to interview Salmon. It's pretty confusing, as the story really doesn't go anywhere. Ben is very aware of his actions and thoughts and the whole book feels like a poem or a song. The art is simple, but nice, so that is definitely a plus. The author asks questions at the end, as if the comic was a school exercise. It's a very quirky thing. There's some very unusual clip art, that doesn't seem to pertain to the story as well. (RE)

\$1.50, Ben Ridder, GPO Box 1735, Hobart, TAS 7001 Australia

Black Light Angels #4

This thick gothic looking zine didn't feel or look like much of anything when I first took a look at it, but it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. The first story is well illustrated with nice thick lines and good contrast of black and white. The story is a comical goth story (ha!) about a band called, what else, Krucifiction. The lead singer is getting sexually pleased in his limo when he finds out the van holding everything that they own, except the band themselves. Frustrations ensue. The art is what I love the best. It's very reminiscent of the art done in Skeleton Key, but has it's own feel at the same time. Large white areas are used well in the second part of the story. The second main feature in this issue is something called Vivisection, where several independent comic artists were given a questionnaire and a series of drawings to do. The result is really interesting. Then there are a few shorter comics (The artist who does the short comic "Undying" is really onto

something nice), some music reviews and other stuff. Not a bad package in all. I'd recommend it to fans of Skeleton Key or goth stuff. (RE)

\$5.00, 121 pgs. Louise Graber, P.O. Box 84, GLEBE NSW 2037, Australia

Black Sheets #15

Big, near magazine quality queerzine that seems to put much of its focus on the leather, S&M scene in San Francisco. This issue focuses on early members in the scene from the sixties through to ties into the late seventies punk movement. This zine could easily appeal to people who like their sex in all forms, but definitely not for the closed minded or sexually squeamish. I found it enlightened to read stories about what early artists and movers and shakers in queer scene had to go through. Interviews or articles on Fred Halsted, Chuck Arnett, Robert Opel, Pat Califia, and more. (AS)

\$6 ppd. with legal age consent statement, PO Box 31155, SF, CA 94131

Bloo Dyde Blud #1

I've never been a fan of Princess Di. Never. All of the overexposure and controversy sickened me. Partially because the paparazzi wouldn't leave this woman alone and partially because who really gives a fuck about the exploits of royalty anyway? This zine takes hating Princess Di to a whole new level. It's a continuous stream of comics filled with jokes most about her death, sex life, and a combination of both, necrophilia. It was a bit entertaining at first, but by the time I was finished, I felt a bit guilty. Just out of my undying love for comics, I'm glad that there is press out there that supports it, but this is definitely for those that enjoy jokes done in bad taste. (FH)

PO Box 348 Flemington Vic Australia 3031

Cold Feet

Personal ramblings from someone with a lot of my same sick feelings, the unfulfillment of life, addictions, and the let down of Columbine. It seems as if Clay is looking for people to connect with who will let him know that it's not crazy to feel this way. I don't believe it is. (AS)

\$1, Clay, 2901 PalmaVista, Las Vegas, NV 89121

Complete Control #5

Greg writes about the local activist group that he was involved with for a couple years. Yvonne talks about the racist Richmond police. Greg talks about his jobs and also interviews an activist serving time in prison. On a whole, I didn't respond to this zine at all. The activist group seemed like it was always falling apart after a few months. Yvonne's article lost my interest very fast and the rest just made me flip through. Zines like this are tricky to review. Someone more into politics might find this to be great. But I find politics to be rather bland. From a writing stance, the activist article seemed really brief and rushed. Written in approx. 14 point type, the article seemed longer but was probably no longer than a page and a half in length. For something that consumed him for three years, it seems like you might have more to talk about. (RE)

\$1.00, P.O. Box 5021, Richmond, VA 23220

Dagger, #25

They're on issue twenty-five, so the majority already know what they're about if they're ever going to know. A straight-up music zine. Specifically, more for those of the upscale indie variety. The reviews are overwhelming. I think they're something like 3/4 of the (about) 100-page magazine. A couple of interviews. 8.5" x 11" newsprint. (RB)

\$2.50, P.O. Box 7605, Santa Rosa, CA 95407-0605

Deformacion Cultural #2

A straight edge hardcore emo zine out of Argentina. Nice photos, interviews with White Frogs, Yoda, and Monster X, reviews, etc. I can't say much else about as it appears to be written in Spanish, and Ich hablo keine Espanol. Basically, I could only read the Dischord ad. (AS)

Casilla De Correo 1424 / Correo Central 1000 / Buenos Aires, Argentina

The Devil's Other Story

Wordy, overwrought pseudo-philosophical garbage. Occasionally something from the author's real life is mentioned like sitting next to Conan O'Brien in a diner but within a few paragraphs he submerges himself in the lexicon of his ego attempts to be what he obviously thinks a writer should be. This is the equivalent of a horrible emo record put down on paper. (RP)

922 Dartmouthglen Way Baltimore, MD 21212

Extra Jazz Issue #66

If you can get past the disgusting cover photos, nearly pornographic photos littered throughout the zine and if you are skilled in French, Extra Jazz may be for you. I, sadly, could not. From the tip sheet: Extra Jazz is a one-man zine. This issue features interviews with Jean-Louis Costes, Paquito Bolino, Bruno Richard, TV Killers and Spaceheads. It has punk rock record reviews and the sentence "Bravo The Makers!" What is the deal with French fries? They're not French. You don't cook them in a frying pan. Who are these people? 8 1/2 X 5 1/2. Copied. 52 pages. (CJK)

\$2. BP 114, 33015 Bordeaux Cedex, France

Formula Magazine #5

I love simple design, a tan fold around cover with an embossed cursive formula in the corner. Formula would blend right in with some folders under a high-schooler's arms. Simple and elegant. The writing within is collections of little stories from people in bands like Fugazi, Jaks, Jawbox and more. Kinda like little conversations from each. I felt like I was sitting on Dad's knee hearing a story about the time he and his crazy friends were naked and there were cops and.... You get the idea, it's real good and for two measly bucks you get some nice photography to break up the text. (EA)

\$2 PO Box 43535 Baltimore, MD 21236

Freaks, Geeks and Pipsqueaks #1 & 2

These little eighth-of-a-page size literary zines contain short stories by different people that the editor managed to obtain in one way or another. He explains where the stories came from in a note on the first page, and usually the sources are quite strange. The stories can be quite strange themselves, as you will see if you send for it. A good effort, and unique, to boot. (BJM)

\$1 for both, PO Box 21544, 1850 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC V5N 4A0 Canada

Fresh Cow Pie, Issue #4, Summer/Fall 1999

I'm a sucker for any zine that includes music reviews. This issue has over 130 and covers everything from Anti-Flag and Atari Teenage Riot to Fountains of Wayne and Guided By Voices. Fresh Cow Pie also appears to be a one-man effort and that of Farmer P, so kudos to him. Features include an interview with Graham Smith of Kleenex Girl Wonder and a dissertation on America's current agriculture crisis. I was only disappointed that Farmer P didn't come through as advertised on the front cover with "hot naked chick pictures inside!" (DJK)

\$2 Farmer P, 5112 77th Ave. SE, Montpelier, ND 58472

Fun, Forest, and Fantasy, #2

Not huge, but it's all true and all good. Personal stories. Alabama sucks, the kids at school sucked, cars suck, and fun was had sneaking out of the house. You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll smile. Good writing, and definitely worth the read, but pretty skimpy. (RB)

55 cents or trade, FFF c/o Tim Rakunze, P.O. Box 5272, Ventura, CA 93005

Funtime #17

This zine is written entirely in Dutch, except for a really extensive Belgian scene report which is in English. From what I can make out, the editor likes hardcore, with this issue featuring interviews with Skarhead, H2O, Petrograd, Buried Alive, No Innocent Victim, and a few others. There are also plenty of reviews and a few columns. I can see this zine being an invaluable resource for the scene from which it originates. (MT)

Johan Quintien, Dutselhoek 12, 3220 Holsbeek, Belgium.

Geek Overload #3

This is an interesting zine of 100 art panels that "reads" like a Choose Your Own Adventure book. I don't really understand the whole thing, but I laughed a few times while reading it. This zine is a short but entertaining read. (MT)

\$2; Shags, 3/81 Rushall Cres., Nth Fitzroy, Melbourne, 3068

Go Metric #11

This is a quick read zine that is always worth your attention. I like the oddities and quirky bands that Go Metric finds and writes about. This issue has two articles about bands that most punkers don't think are cool, the Kinks and Queen. Both articles make convincing arguments why you should-n't listen avoid bands that are/were on major labels (face it kiddies early rock 'n' roll is where punk rock spawned from). Nice layout that has a nice old-school feel to it, not over-processed created on Adobe this and that. Go Metric sums it all up with a hilarious piece about the truth behind straight edge that just has to be read. (EA)

Go Metric PO Box 250878 NY, NY 10025

Gramophone: A Guide to Putting Out Records

You MUST read this if you have any inkling of putting out a record. That applies to me, and this has been my little portable gospel of the vinyl pressing religion ever since I got it. Written by Themba Lewis, this is a quarter-size zine with nothing flashy, but chock full of needed information and loose advice. A great starter guide that picks up with your completed recording and takes it all the way through distribution and promotion. Trust me, it's every important aspect that you'd get stuck on and discouraged about unless you have some help. The essential steps are covered, both simple and hard. A pure gem. (RB)

Mt. Pleasant Press, 720 Franklin St., Olympia, WA 98501

Gumshoe Issue #4

You have seen this zine before. It is the smaller regional version of the national punk rock Bible. You will call him Mini MMR. Your hands are stained black after you read it. You are not surprised by the columns, band interviews (Teen Idols, The Strike, and Buck) and record/zine reviews. You wonder why. Just because you have the ability to self-produce a publication does not necessarily mean that you should. You compare it to white trash breeding and laugh quietly to yourself because you think that you are funny. Standard. Newsprint. 32 pages. (CJK)

\$2. 5500 Prytania St. PMB #133, New Orleans, LA 70115

Imagine #1

A very well written and thought out collection of views, quotes and beliefs on anarchy while also touching upon veganism and atheism. There are a lot of quotes about similar ways of life and beliefs from anarchists and non-anarchists a like to show a common ground between people who desire change. The contents within this zine are common questions and answers about the anarchist standpoint on some issues, the constant decline in our government, a debate about whether Noam Chomsky is an anarchist or not, and police brutality and aggravated assault. There is also a great review section of reading materials that may help you see more eye to eye with where the writer is coming from and to become more informed about anarchy in general. This is a great and thought provoking zine especially when many issues about (at times quite unbelievable) poor decisions made by the American government and its civil servants were presented. Many reasons were brought up on why our system is wrong, but few alternatives were given. This is not a knock on this zine by far. While reading I was hoping to find something about possible

thoughts or steps needed to be taken towards a solution to these problems. Maybe this is an unrealistic question for a reviewer to bring up, however a legitimate one based on how the quality of the contents had been presented. This worth checking out. (DM)

\$2; Imagine, P.O. Box 8145, Reno, NV 89507

Impact Press #23, October/November 1999

Politics and music prevail in this zine. Feature articles include that of religion on social advancement, a debate over the handling of prisoners in America's penal system, and one about DNA technology conspiracy. Comics appear as well, along with over 100 CD and 7" record reviews of Alkaline Trio, Fastbacks, Hot Water Music, Royal Trux, The Atomiks, Luckie Strike and more. (DJK)

\$2 Impact Press, PMB 361, 10151 University Blvd., Orlando, FL 32817

In Case Of Breakdown #5

Ah, a good old-fashioned punk rock zine which thankfully contains more interesting little written bits than music because anyone can review music but this is funny and cool and has a quiz where you draw a pig's face, a list of different types of people who use urinals and more stuff. Fun. (RP)

Prit Decay 4 Canterbury Lane, Bethania, Qld 4205 Australia

Jitter vol. 5, #3

I completely hate zines like this. 90% reviews of records and live shows, four really terrible interviews (Boy Sets Fire, DJ Spooky, Staind, and The Delgados) and bad design and Xerox. Do you really think that it is THAT necessary to tell the world what you think about a million releases that have already been interviewed in bigger magazines that tend to know what they are talking about? If so, try reviewing for them instead of forcing yet another magazine fueled by advertising and the need to waste copious amounts of good paper. I hope you like all the free records you get. (RE)

2549 S. Queen St. York, PA 17402

Jitter, Vol. 5, #4

A music zine. It's nice how there's more writing than ads. Decent quality interviews with Hot Water Music, Lynnfield Pioneers, Machinehead, and Frenzo Rom. Lots and lots of music reviews, and big, thorough show reviews, too. The music reviews often go into a complete band history - that's nice. I think they have a soft spot for crappy metal, though. Ah well, it's a nice read to keep yourself informed. Oh yeah, nuns & guns! (RB)

2549 S. Queen St., York, PA 17402

Klusterfuct #5

I took one look at this zine and knew exactly what I was in store for. Poorly laid out and put together zines are the most frustrating things in the entire world. So I begin to read this hate-fueled zine by the nasty author with an attitude. I think, ha ha, what a cute little zine from this angry high school girl... and then I find out that this is made by an adult, a graphic designer adult, and I am truly let down. Not only is this the epitome of what bad zines are, but she doesn't use her experience as a designer to make it appealing anyone but herself. She starts the zine off with really poor self-promotion, then she

launches into her zine which is filled with poor writing and poetry. Masturbation techniques, why she loves video games, being a pervert, being able to kick ass, a picture of her punk rock car and more make up this zine. Aside from laughing at the stupidity of some of her comments, this zine is a total waste. Sometimes personal zines shouldn't be seen by people that don't know you personally. Next. (RE)

P.O. Box 2142 Vacaville, CA 95696-2142

Law of Inertia Issue 6

I could really start to raise hell about the fact that there is a, God forbid, barcode (the horror) on the glossy cover of this professional looking magazine - this one goes beyond the tag zine. Barcodes aren't punk. Burn the witch. But to be honest with you; I don't care. Slap a barcode on my first born and call him 7559-60669-2. This is a modern leaning punk rock publication that is very similar in content to Punk Planet. It is just a notch below PP in design. It is a good effort but I am starting to ask myself how many more punkish/indie rock based music magazines we really need. Standard. Newsprint. Many Pages. (CJK)

\$3. 205 Dryden Rd., suite 154, Ithaca, NY 14850

Liar's Diary #22

Graphically, this zine seems to be obsessed with erotica. Textually, this zine is kind of a myth. I'm assuming this is all fiction, but much of it is very obscure, broken stories that make no sense. Some of it makes sense, since there are rather complete short stories. But, overall, this adds up to one thing: nonsense. I guess some people enjoy it, but without any organization it is just plain confusing. What is the point? (PB)

15 Slocum Street #3, Providence, RI 02909

Life in a Bungalow #10

Newsprint, half-size, with some reviews, a couple of things that are somewhere between columns and articles, and a good number of ads from the Big Punk Record Labels. Pieces on pro wrestling, Melrose Place, and an experience at a Goldfinger show four years ago. There is also a featured interview with H2O, in which, in my opinion, they come off looking pretty stupid. This zine is pretty juvenile, but I'm guessing these people are in high school, so perhaps it's expected. And they spell "bungalow" wrong. Not my style. (BJM)

\$1, PO Box 413, W.O.B., West Orange NJ 07052

Love Sick

YES!!!! EXCELLENT!!!! A killer fictional short story about a guy's adventures at a white-trash apartment complex - I would love to check out this guy Cole Proto's other stories and best of all - he's from Wisconsin! Home of the deranged, to be sure - this is great. (RP)

\$1 ppd. CatHouse Press PO Box 1421 Oshkosh, WI 54903

Me Not #1

Me Not is a thin personal zine with a lot of random opinions. Most of the stuff is pretty trivial, such as rants about girls, loneliness, an unforeseen future, school, et cetera. This is the type of thing young high school kids paste together at Kinkos, but they don't really pass as a genuine zine worth showing to anyone outside your immediate group of friends. (PB)

50 cents, Kyle, 401 Colonial Drive #9, Ipswich, MA 01938

Microfilm #1

This is a great looking zine for a reasonable price. This is an all black and white, glossy page zine all about the world of independent film making. You can tell that the writers feel very strongly about this genre through their contributions in this zine. Inside are the opinions of indie film vs. major movie companies, the coverage of three film fests, the making of several indie films (one of which featuring Bruce Campbell of Evil Dead fame), and a movie project based on zines (called Zined), to name just some of the included items in Microfilm. Like I mentioned before, this is a great zine. If you are interested about independent film, this is a great place to start for information as well as a resource. (DM)

\$5 PP; Optyx Press, P.O. Box 45, Champaign, IL 61824-0045

Midget Breakdancing Digest, Issue #13

The focus here is on punk music. This issue has interviews with Hot Water Music and A.F.I. and a diary of the editor and staff's journey through the Pacific Northwest (titled "Indie Rock Summer Camp, 1999"). Also includes about 200 record reviews covering everything from American Football and Blinky to Electric Frankenstein and Leatherface. (DJK)

Free MBD, P.O. Box 2337, Boulder, CO 80306

Moral Minority, #3

Political hardcore zine from Canada, with a special interest in women's issues. Some music coverage (especially local) and tons of articles. Their opinions are well-stated and they did their research. I liked the list of contacts for "no sweat" (no child labor, etc.) corporations. Pretty intelligent. (RB)

\$3, 43 Crimp Place, Saskatoon, SK, S7M 4E9, Canada

Multiball #18

Here we have one of the best zines out there. It's a simple formula - don't make another MRR, Flipside, Punk Planet, Jersey Beat clone. Once upon a time the small zine Multiball was born and I was hooked at this little black and white zine that wrote about music and Pinball. Whether it was a story about the Bride of Pinbot or reading reviews of the newest Estrus records - I was hooked. Now our little baby is now glossy covered and all grown up. The best part is it is only get better. This issue has a wonderful interview with D'Lana Tunnell of film and Oblivians record covers. An excellent interview with the White Stripes and duh' lots of Pinball. You probably already hip to this, but you can definitely pick up on this late if not. It comes with a split 7" with Kent 3 and Leatherboy that is just icing to the cake. Think of it as something like Gearhead (but with Pinball instead of hot rods). (EA)

\$4.50 PO Box 40005 Portland, OR 97240

Psychic Twins #1

The amount of comic books that I read is astounding. I've been a comic geek since I was seven. I read everything from the X-men to any number of smaller press releases. With all of this experience, I feel that I can be justified in calling myself a comic book critic. From the very moment I laid my eyes on this comic, I was impressed. I couldn't wait to turn each page. The art was simple, but

very expressive. The story, about some secret, psychic teens, was a bit corny, but entertaining none the less. I give it two thumbs up. (FH)

68 McKean St. nth Fitzroy Victoria, Australia 3068

Schuell, #J

After reading the Alkaline Trio interview that appeared in this magazine, the *Schuell* interview is a godsend. It's so funny and you can tell the band's really into it and a good conversation is actually had. Good ones with Pezz and the Beatnik Termites, too. Also has a thing on tattoos and tons of reviews. I think the entire mag is done by one person, which is quite a feat. It only comes out twice a year, but it's worth the wait. Just the right amount of ads, too. They don't become litter blocking your way to the goods, just good info. Hey, they took a band that's been interviewed in every town along the way, that has gotten way too much zine media coverage in the last year, and made it interesting to read about them again. That's pretty cool. (RB)

\$1, P.O. Box 4663, Lafayette, IN 47903

Self-Defense #5

Written by a girl named Marissa, this half-size photocopied cut-and-paste zine is mostly personal writings and articles on activism of one sort or another. Articles on Chiapas, Jackhammer zine, her experience in AmeriCorps, and muscle cars. It's a good read, but it's sloppiness gets in the way sometimes. (BJM)

\$1 or 3 stamps, 135 N Terrace, Wichita KS 67208

The Sid and Vicious Project- Installment 1.0

Ah, the adventures of young people in love. I found this zine to be invigorating. It seemed like all of the hopes, dreams, good and bad times of being young were captured in a mere 16 pages. The writing is wonderful and filled with detail for the smallest pleasures. The exploits of "Sid" and his friends are consuming and familiar, punk rock or otherwise. I whole heartedly recommend this zine to anyone that has ever grown up. (FH)

\$1 Bobby C. 404 W. Santa Fe. #213 Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Signal to Noise #14

I may have been the wrong person to review this zine. Signal to Noise is a magazine that covers improve and experimental music. StN interviews Marshall Allen and the Sun Ra Arkestra, Ben Watson, and Dave McElfresh. There are also live reviews, news, and CD reviews. From what I read, the contents are extremely well written and informative. I learned something about forms of music that I lack any knowledge in. To the best of my knowledge, this is an excellent source of information. Since I don't have anything to compare this to, I think in my personal opinion that this would be a great zine to assist the reader if he/she was interested in learning more about improve and experimental music. (DM)

\$4 ppd.; Sign to Noise, 416 Pine St., Burlington, VT 05401

Snapshot #4

I like his drawing style-like a more-detailed, unpolitical Seth Tobocman, but the pages are filled with everyday trivialities that I wouldn't even mention to my friends in conversation, much less illustrate and try to sell to strangers. Maybe he should become a junkie or thief or rapist so he'd have something interesting to talk about. (RP)

36 pgs \$2 Jeff Levine 4956 Kester Ave. #6 Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

Something for Nothing, #45

The brunt of this one is the SFN dude on a month long tour thingy last summer. Selling zines and taking pictures, then make another zine about that. I must say, that even though it doesn't interest me, the layout and design on this rag is always quality stuff. Everyone should check it out at least once, as it is a staple of certain zine-lovers' collections, I'm sure. Oh yeah, they liked the Hers Never Existed album, so that's a big plus. (RB)

free/stamps, 516 Third St. NE, Massillon, OH 44646

Soul Stamping

This zine is about mail and rubber stamp art and is presented loose-leaf in a gallery format in black and white. Also includes a few poems and an offer for a nudes catalog. (DJK)

\$2 and SASE Happy Phantom, 531 King Phillip St., 2nd Floor, Fall River, MA 02724

Squat Thrust #4

An alright little zines with some interesting bits of news from the world, a few reviews of books, zines and movies and a couple short fictional stories-nothing too special. (RP)

\$1 + 2 stamps PO Box 141497 Gainesville, FL 32614

Take a Stand Winter 1999. Issue #3.

The first thing I noticed about Take a Stand, even after reading the copied handwritten intro, is the clean layout. It is almost stark with many pages being type on white paper. It is a punk rock zine with record reviews, an interview with Tilt and record reviews. But wait; don't throw it in the garbage yet. It has an interesting narrative about some dude trying to get his grandfather's FBI file. Big Brother is watching. It also has an interview with former Cleveland Cavalier/New York Knick current Golden State Warrior forward Chris Mills who, apparently, is also a musician. 81/2 X 5 1/2. Copied. 32 Pages. (CJK)

\$1. 0615 SW Palatine Hill Road, Portland, OR 97219

Terrible 1 #4

From what I understood, this is a normally a zine about professional bike racing. As interesting as that seems to me, I was happily surprised by the format of this issue. It is in the form of a book featuring life from the outlook of a dollar named "Bill". Bill passes from many people's hands and he gets to see the world and read about his perspective on people, places and events that he happens to see by exchanging hands. This is a great way to present a zine. Stories, music reviews, and BMX biking are seen through the perspective of this dollar. I honestly wasn't looking forward to doing this review after I read a letter from the creator behind Terrible 1. This was an excellent surprise and a great zine that is worth checking out. Also for the price you pay, you get an 81 page zine and stickers. (DM)

\$3; Terrible One, P.O. Box 49860, Austin, TX 78765

Thirtyone, #3

Morality is the name of the game with Thirtyone. It professes against homophobia and racism and champions women's rights, and couldn't be more sincere in its simple but committed approach. Includes ten

record reviews (Donnas, Sleater-Kinney, MXPX, Strife and more) and elementary punk rock guitar, bass guitar, and paper airplane instruction sets. (DJK)

\$1 P.O. Box 55603, Hayward, CA 94545

Thought Process #3

This is a quarter-page size zine of personal writing, journal-entry style. The layout is a fitting cut-and-paste. It gives you a good peek at the mind of the writer. Overall it is an interesting read. The stories are good, but the obvious spelling and grammar errors throughout get quite annoying after a while. (BJM)

\$1, Lowell, 15131 Beverly, Overland Park KS 66203

Uprising #6

This is a really nice small (but growing, it says) zine covering punk and hardcore with a local Toledo/Detroit slant. This issue has interviews with Good Riddance and Capture the Flag as well as plenty of record reviews, show reviews, and a few columns. It's all laid out really nicely and looks pretty slick. Good work. (MT)

\$1 ppd., Uprising, P.O. Box 2251, Monroe, MI 48161.

Why We Live

I'm not sure if this is a one-time thing or the first in a series, but the subtitle here (self-defense and women's health) says it all. This cut-and-paste style zine is a wealth of information for males and females alike, and it is written from a feminist perspective. Articles concern women's empowerment, experience as women, and, of course, self-defense and health. Very informative, if you trust all of the sources. (BJM)

c/o Luran Barry, Smith College, box 6302, 98 Green Street, Northampton MA 01063

Why We Live (Activism and Body Image) #1

Everything you've ever needed to know to start felling better about yourself and becoming a hate free person is contained in this zine. I've never seen all of the ideas included within presented in such a positive, helpful manner before. I've been involved in the more political realms of the underground scene for a while, lately I've been being lazy and falling into the trappings of the society that we live in. not since hearing Fifteen for the first time has anything inspired to wake up and take a look at the injustice going on around and inside of me. Thank you. (FH)

Luran Barry Smith College Box 6302 98 Green St. North Hampton, MA 01063-1000

Wilnot #6

This zine of comics that, although not containing the most stunning artwork inside, is very entertaining. This whole issue has a running theme of love. After reading these comics, I think it's safe to say that the editor has a few issues to deal with about the subject of love... really. But that makes for a good read, as the twisted story lines of these comics are excellent. I laughed out loud multiple times reading this... I'd really like to see more. (MT)

Sticky Comics, LPO Box 194, ANV 2601 ACT.

PAPER BOOKS

but you're also
person you see
ave to see

Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture

Simon Reynolds
Routledge Press

It's not often that a piece of popular music criticism can be described as a mammoth undertaking, but *Generation Ecstasy* certainly fits the bill. A large percentage of the music books out there consist largely of hot air. They inflate the content of a magazine article to hideous proportions. But even though *Generation Ecstasy* tops out at over 400 pages, I never had the sense that I was wasting my time reading this 25-year history.

I've been a big fan of Simon Reynolds's music criticism since I first ran across it in the late 1980s, when I used to pore over the pages of *New Music Express* and *Melody Maker* with religious fervor. Reynolds's prose made it impossible to overlook his name. Some of his longer pieces from that period were compiled in his book *Blissed Out*, which is so beautifully written that it convinced me to purchase records I was sure I'd dislike. That's quite an achievement. Yet for all the respect I had for Reynolds as a writer, I never expected him to do the kind of in-depth research that culminated in *Generation Ecstasy*.

This is not to imply that Reynolds has lost his feel for language. *Generation Ecstasy* is full of fine writing, like when he describes being turned on to rave culture:

This time, fully E-d up, I finally grasped viscerally why the music was made the way it was; how certain tingy textures goosepimpled your skin and particular oscillator riffs triggered the E-rush; the way the gaseous diva vocals mirrored your own gushing emotions.

There are many passages like this one in the book, simultaneously precise and evocative.

But in spite of Reynolds's literary prowess, by far the most impressive thing about *Generation Ecstasy* is its scope. It provides the sort of history which popular music has rarely witnessed: exhaustively detailed and coherently argued. Reynolds does his best to document the diversity of rave culture, from its origins in 1980s techno and house through the "electronica" era of the late 1990s. He deserves praise for explaining the particularities of race, class, and drug-use which have defined the different rave scenes over the years. More impressive still is his facility for explaining how and why the records and rituals of one scene—like Manchester in the late 1980s—were transported to another—like the San Francisco Bay Area of the mid-1990s.

And Reynolds consistently reminds us of his basic point. Trained by our high-school and college English teachers to concentrate on the text—the music, in this case—our critical faculties need to be radically reconstructed if we are to understand rave culture at all, because it renders the distinction between text and context meaningless. "Rave culture is more than music plus drugs; it's a matrix of lifestyle, ritualized behavior, and beliefs. To the participant, it feels like a religion; to the mainstream observer, it looks more like a sinister cult," Reynolds explains. In other words, rave culture is a total experience.

I've known enough ravers to confirm Reynolds's assessment. Yet I'm troubled by the implication that rave culture is fundamentally different from other forms of music consumption. Punk may not produce the same kind of total experience as

rave culture, but it certainly has the power to be all-encompassing. To use an example from close to my home, the regulars at 924 Gilman Street in the early 1990s were obviously there for more than music. Many of them never even went inside, or played basketball during the bands' performances if they did. And yet they were undeniably members of the peculiar community that had coalesced around the club. I suppose what I'm really getting at here is the need for a detailed history of punk to match *Generation Ecstasy*. Who knows? Maybe one of you will write its companion piece.

—Charlie Bertsch

Marx in Soho

Howard Zinn
South End Press

Howard Zinn is second only to Noam Chomsky as an icon of the American Left. His *People's History of the United States* is the most popular alternative to the deceptions of high-school textbook history, and Zinn is constantly appearing on behalf of a laundry list of leftist causes.

Part of Zinn's appeal lies in the fact that he's one of the elder statesmen of radical politics. No piercings, no fashion-conscious posturings, no polymorphous perversity—Howard's an all-American lefty, as wholesome as apple pie. So when I came across his creative writing, I was not sure what to expect. I mean, it's not like I'm in mourning for the poetry that Noam Chomsky hasn't had a chance to write.

Anyway, our topic here is *Marx in Soho*. It's a one-actor play that forms a companion piece to Zinn's earlier play *Emma*, about the anarchist Emma Goldman. In this

one, Marx returns from the dead to address a crowd in New York's Soho. Zinn explains his motivations for writing *Marx in Soho* in the illuminating foreword. "I wanted to show Marx as few people knew him, as a family man, struggling to support his wife and children," he writes. Zinn goes on to explain that he wished to show Marx's involvement in revolutionary politics, not just as a thinker, but as a doer. And he wanted to make it clear, in the wake of Communism's fall, that Marx's critique of capitalism "remains fundamentally true in our time."

Pulling this off in a play as short as *Marx in Soho* is a difficult task. It makes it necessary to shift back and forth between Marx's personal reminiscences—about living in a London slum, his favorite daughter Eleanor, the boils on his butt—and a recapitulation of his public words. When I started reading *Marx in Soho*, I found myself wincing at those moments when Zinn would have Marx explain his theories such as, "Did I not say, a hundred and fifty years ago, that capitalism would enormously increase the wealth of society, but that this wealth would be concentrated in fewer and fewer hands?" Something about the length and formality of this question make it seem forced, as if Zinn's Marx were merely a convenient device for explaining the basic points of his work.

As I read on, however, I started getting into the flow of the play a bit more. Sure, it's awkward and stiff, but Marx wasn't exactly famous for the sportin' life. The play does a remarkably good job of making Marx accessible to people who would only use *Das Kapital* to prop open a window. There's even a little unspoken drama when Marx is discussing his wife Jenny's resentment towards Lenchen, the maid supplied by his bourgeois in-laws:

The love was still there. But, at a certain point, things changed. I don't know. Jenny said it was because she was no longer the great beauty I

had wooed. That made me angry. She said it was because of Lenchen. That made me even more angry. She said I was angry because it was true. That made me furious!

You get a real sense here of the contradictions in the Marx household. Marx doesn't really deny the accusation. Rather, he just sort of slides out of it like a former-day Bill Clinton.

I suppose the real virtue of *Marx in Soho* is that by presenting Marx as a real person, boils and all, it actually humanizes his work. People have been denouncing Marx for 150 years on the basis of his personal life. "He wouldn't even support his own family" is a familiar anti-communist cry. Unlike the image-makers in the Soviet propaganda machine, Zinn confronts these criticisms head on. He lets us see Marx, not as a saint or a screw-up, but as somebody who refused the easy life for himself and his family for the sake of workers everywhere.

If that last sentence sounds a little too sentimental, you can blame *Marx in Soho*.

—Charlie Bertsch

The Aztec Love God

**Tony Diaz
FC2**

There was a time when nearly all the minority literature in the US was published on small presses like FC2. Even the works of well-know writers like Zora Neale Hurston and Chester Himes drifted in and out of print, their future bound to the fate of their publishers' money-starved businesses. Things are a lot different now. The situation of American minorities may not have improved much in the last 25 years—in some respects it's actually worse—but the situation of American minority literature has. Texts by African-American, Asian-American, Latino, and LGBT authors have become staples of mainstream publishing houses that can afford to splurge on the look of a book. So I was a little taken aback when I came across

The Aztec Love God. The book's packaging partakes of the same low-fi aesthetic as the works of many of today's "experimental"—read "white"—authors.

I'm not going to be an asshole and say that I found the slightly-better-than-laser-written quality refreshing. But it did make me take notice of Diaz's book. Paging through it rapidly, I started to get a sense of why it might not have passed major-label muster. *The Aztec Love God* is deliberately disjointed, combining the story of an aspiring Latino comedian with the monologues he delivers as part of his act. It's also told in retrospect. The book begins with a frame that deliberately references the prologue of Ralph Ellison's classic novel *Invisible Man*:

I am a behind the scenes man. Invisible by choice, not unwillingly wiped off your central nervous system. No. Invisible to seep deeper into your receiving system, your super-central nervous system where the frequencies you experience but try to ignore make you nervous. There is where I plant the crops I pick.

It's a promising beginning, particularly if you love *Invisible Man* the way I do. And it's got a bit of an edge too, paying homage to Ellison's masterwork as a way of slyly reminding us that no work of fiction by an American Latino has come close to attaining its fame.

The problem is that the rest of the book doesn't fulfill this promise. It certainly has its moments. Some of the monologues had me laughing out loud. The story itself does a good job of conveying the protagonist's nervousness. Yet overall *The Aztec Love God* seems to be caught between a hard place and a rock. It's too experimental to really work as a story, but not experimental enough to make the reader forgive the story's lack of depth. Diaz has two collections—one of short stories and one of essays—coming out soon. It will be interesting to see whether they deliver what *The Aztec Love God* only promises.

—Charlie Bertsch

All books reviewed in Punk Planet are independently published by small or academic presses. Due to space constraints and length requirements, not all books we receive will be reviewed, as it takes quite a bit more time to read & review a book (and write the corresponding review) than it does to plunk a needle down on a record and write a snappy capsule. If you'd like to have your book reviewed in Punk Planet, please mail it to: Punk Planet attn: Book Reviews PO Box 464 Chicago IL 60690 if you want anything else reviewed, please mail it to the reviews address given at the front of the magazine.

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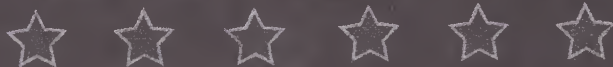
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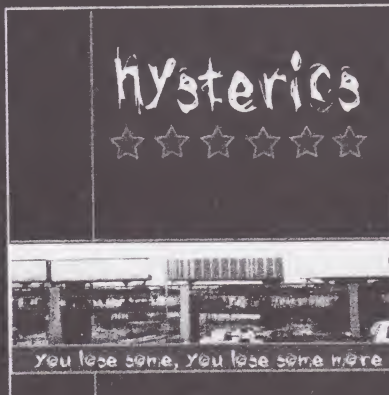
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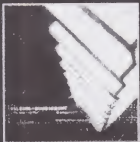
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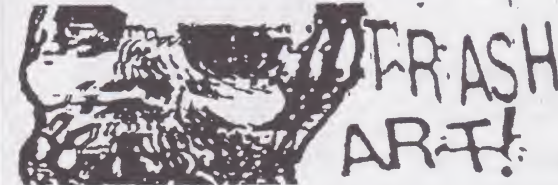
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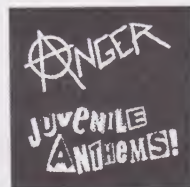
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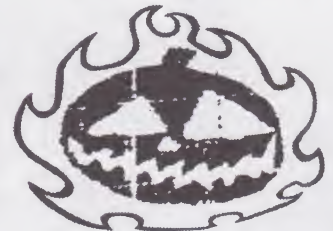
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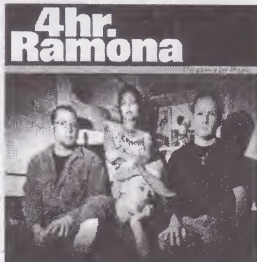
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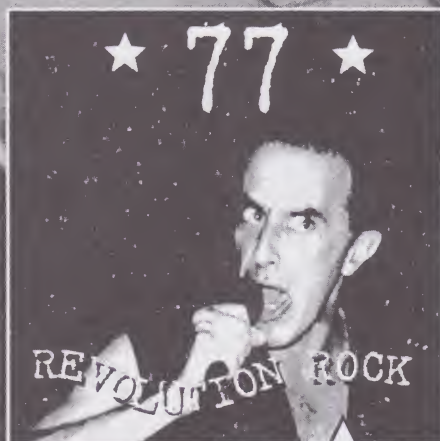
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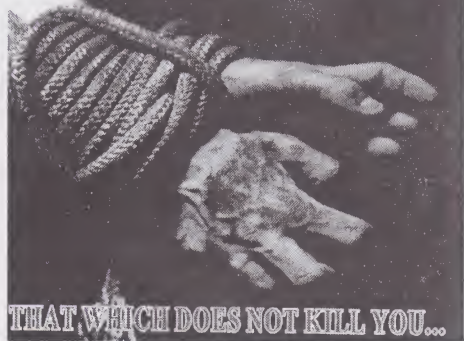
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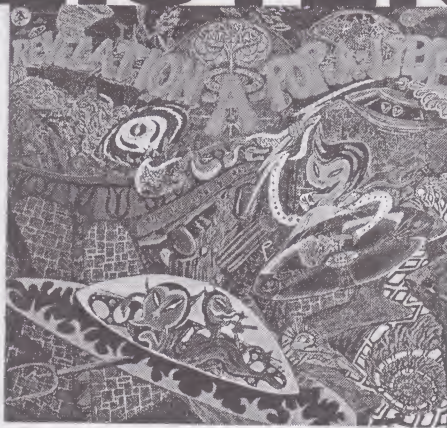
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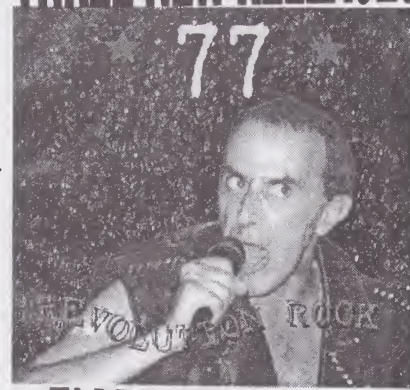
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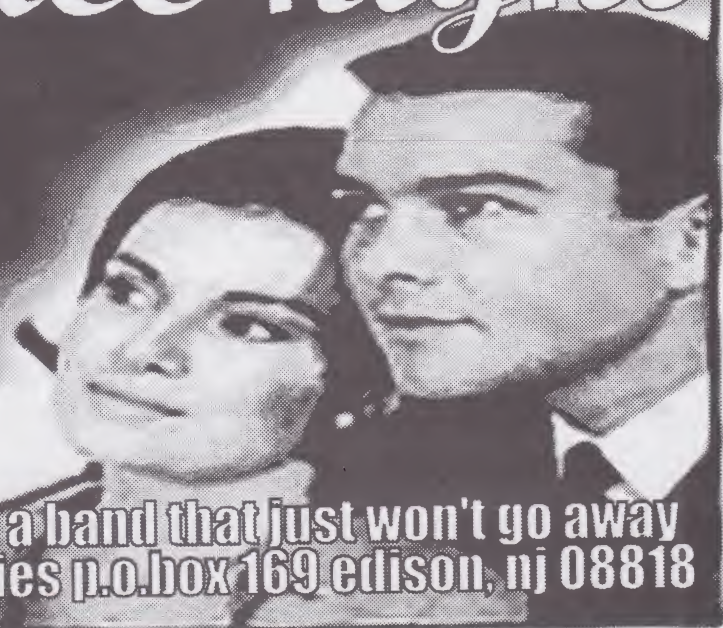
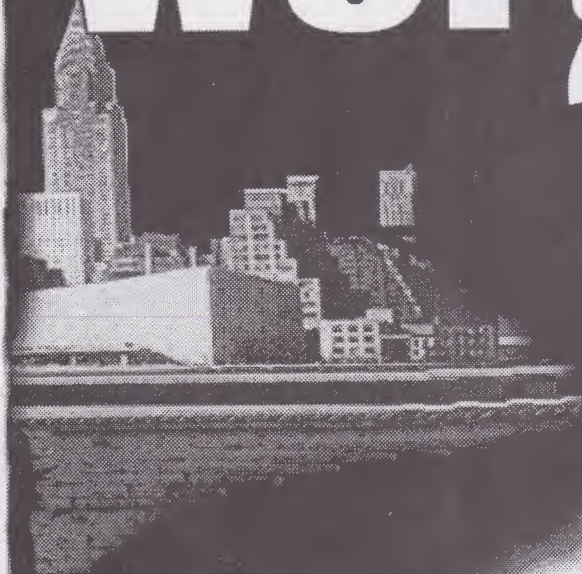


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PP30 THE MURDER OF IRAQ. Punk Planet #30 devotes 18 pages to coverage of the horrible

destruction reaped on the Iraqi people by the US and UN's economic sanctions. Also in this issue: BRATMOBILE, TODAY IS THE DAY, THRILL JOCKEY RECORDS, SEAWEED, WICKED FARLEYS, VINYL COMMUNICATIONS and BLUETIP. Articles on JESSE "THE BODY" VENTURA'S VICTORY IN MINNESOTA; the MISSION YUPPIE ERADICATION PROJECT, a militant group bent on ending gentrification in San Francisco; THE GREEN PARTY IN ARCAT, CALIFORNIA; and a UNION VICTORY IN A NICARAGUAN SWEATSHOP. Plus an expanded DIY section, columns, reviews and much much more. 136 pgs.

PP31 features a much-anticipated talk with FUGAZI and DISCHORD RECORDS frontman IAN MACKAYE. Also interviewed in this issue is THE AVENGERS' PENELOPE HUSTON. Additionally, there are talks with TED LEO, ICU, LIFTER PULLER, and DÅLEK. Punk Planet #31 also looks at the DEAD KENNEDY'S LAWSUIT—this article sheds light on the bizarre situation that has arisen to pit former bandmates against each other. PP31 also takes a look at THE POSSIBLE CLOSING OF GILMAN STREET, MAIL ORDER BRIDES FROM RUSSIA and LIVING WITH CHRONIC CYSTITIS. Plus, columns, reviews, DIY and much much more 136 pgs.

PP32 takes a personal look at the Kosovo Crisis. A moving, troubling and angering piece, LIFE DURING WARTIME: LETTERS FROM THE KOSOVO CRISIS will not allow you to look at the news the same way. In addition to these gripping letters, PP32 also features an interview with K RECORDS' CALVIN JOHNSON. Also interviewed in PP32 are NEUROSIS, ORI, MURDER CAN BE FUN FANZINE's John Marr, THE ETERNALZ, ASPHODEL

RECORDS, SUBMISSION HOLD, and eclectic art mailorder CATCH OF THE DAY MAILORDER. In addition to all these interviews, Punk Planet #32 features articles the COMMUNITY RADIO MOVEMENT IN WASHINGTON DC; MULTIETHNICITIES IN MODERN CULTURE; and a revealing look at GENTRIFICATION IN TODAY'S URBAN AMERICA. Plus much, much more. 144pgs

PP33 Sept/Oct. 1999 takes a peek at the GROWING HACKTIVIST MOVEMENT. Hacktivism has brought civil disobedience to the Internet. Also in this issue, filmmaker JEM COHEN TALKS ABOUT MAKING "INSTRUMENT", THE FUGAZI DOCUMENTARY. In addition, PP33 features interviews with JADE TREE RECORDS, THE MELVINS, OLD TIME RELIQUIN, ALKALINE TRIO AND EUPHONIE. Articles in this issue include "Growing Freedom," A LOOK AT A COMMUNITY-BASED FARM IN INNER-CITY WASHINGTON DC; "Ghosts of Tiananmen," AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT TIENANMEN SQUARE 10 YEARS AFTER THE CHINESE UPRISING THERE; "Broken Vows" A COMPELLING ARGUMENT AGAINST MARRIAGE; and "A WITCH HUNT IN PUERTO RICAN CHICAGO," a gripping look at the government's persecution of Chicago's Puerto Rican community. Plus much more! 144pgs.

PP34 Nov/Dec 1999 Punk Planet closes out the decade with one of the most controversial issues we've printed. PP34 takes an in-depth look at THE WARPED TOUR—and it ain't pretty folks. From its rampant sexism to its exploitative commercialism to sponsor Vans Shoes use of sweatshop labor, PP exposes the inner workings and hypocrisy of the so-called "punk rock summer camp." Also in this issue, Punk Planet sits down with WCW WRESTLER VAMPIRO, an old punk rocker who

achieved fame and fortune wrestling in Mexico and is now making a name for himself here in the United States. Also in this issue are interviews with MANS RUIN RECORDS' KOZIK, SONIC YOUTH'S THURSTON MOORE, THE REPLICANTS, CADILLACA, OPERATION IVY's JESSE MICHAELS and PEDRO THE LION. Articles in PP34 include a look at WOMEN IN THE ZAPATISTA MOVEMENT, a very moving LETTER FROM PALESTINE, the case against GENETICALLY ALTERED FOOD, and a look at DIY PORN ON THE INTERNET. Plus much, much more—except for reviews, which were missing from this issue. Whoops! But hey, it's still a great read at 136 pgs.

PP35 Jan/Feb 2000 Punk Planet ushers in the new Millennium with the ALL INTERVIEWS ISSUE. Headlining this special issue is a rare talk with JOE STRUMMER. The frontman of punk legends THE CLASH talks with Punk Planet's Joel Schalit about his recent solo career, helping create the London punk scene of the '70s, politics and much, much more. Also featured in this issue, is a rare talk with LUNGFISH. This Dischord band is one of punk's biggest enigmas—this interview is sure to be an eye-opener. Also in the all-interviews issue, talks with THE NEED, AMERICAN STEEL MERGE, the LEFT BUSINESS OBSERVER'S DOUG HENWOOD, the MR. T EXPERIENCE's DR. FRANK, the mastermind behind BIG WHEEL RECREATION RECORDS, POSITIVE FORCE DC's MARK ANDERSON and much, much more. 152pgs

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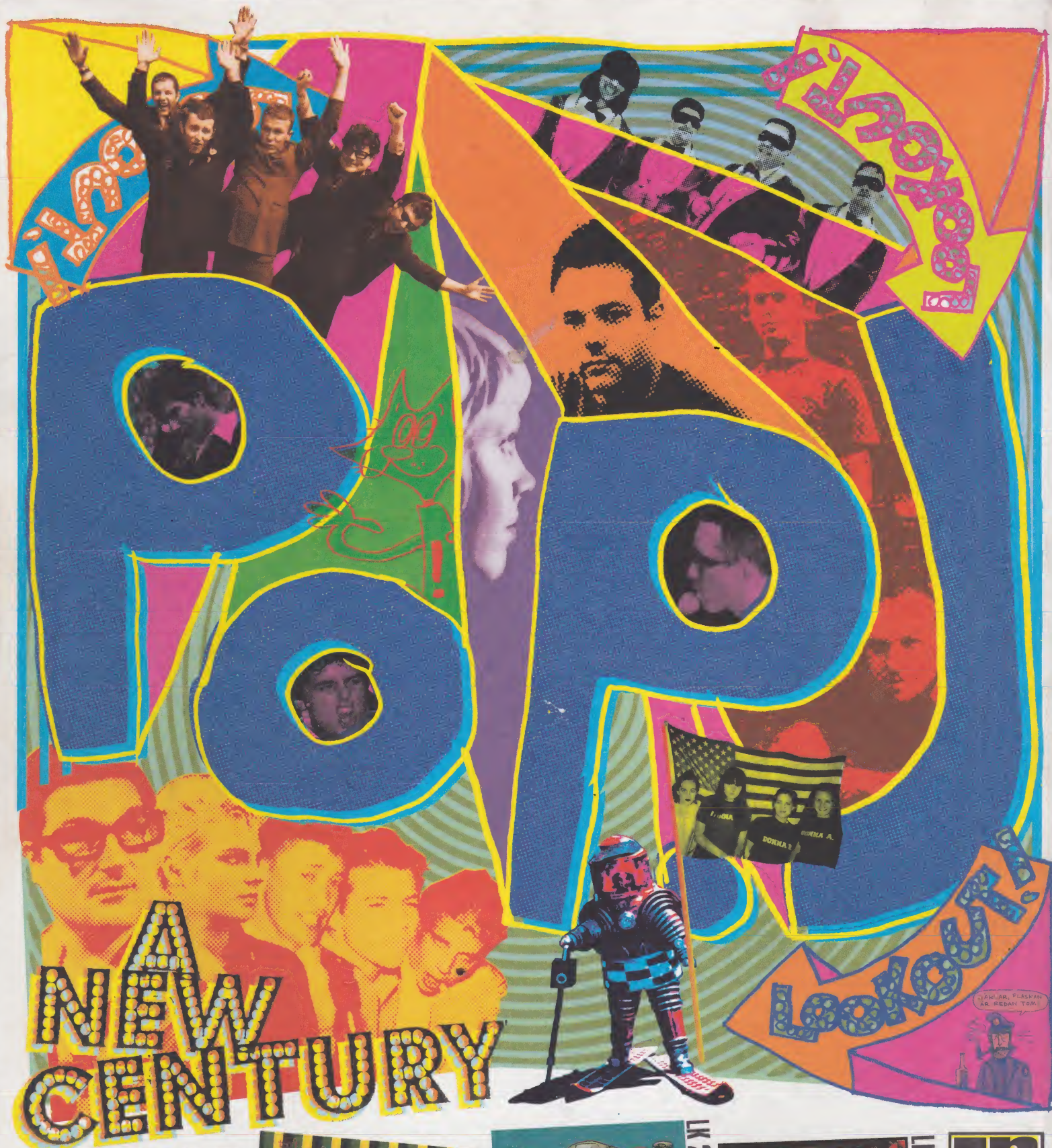
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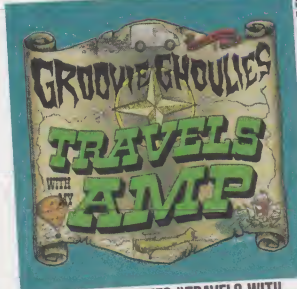
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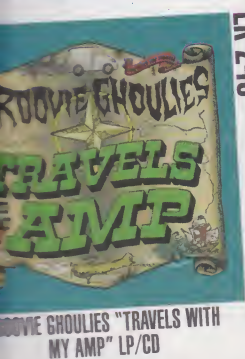
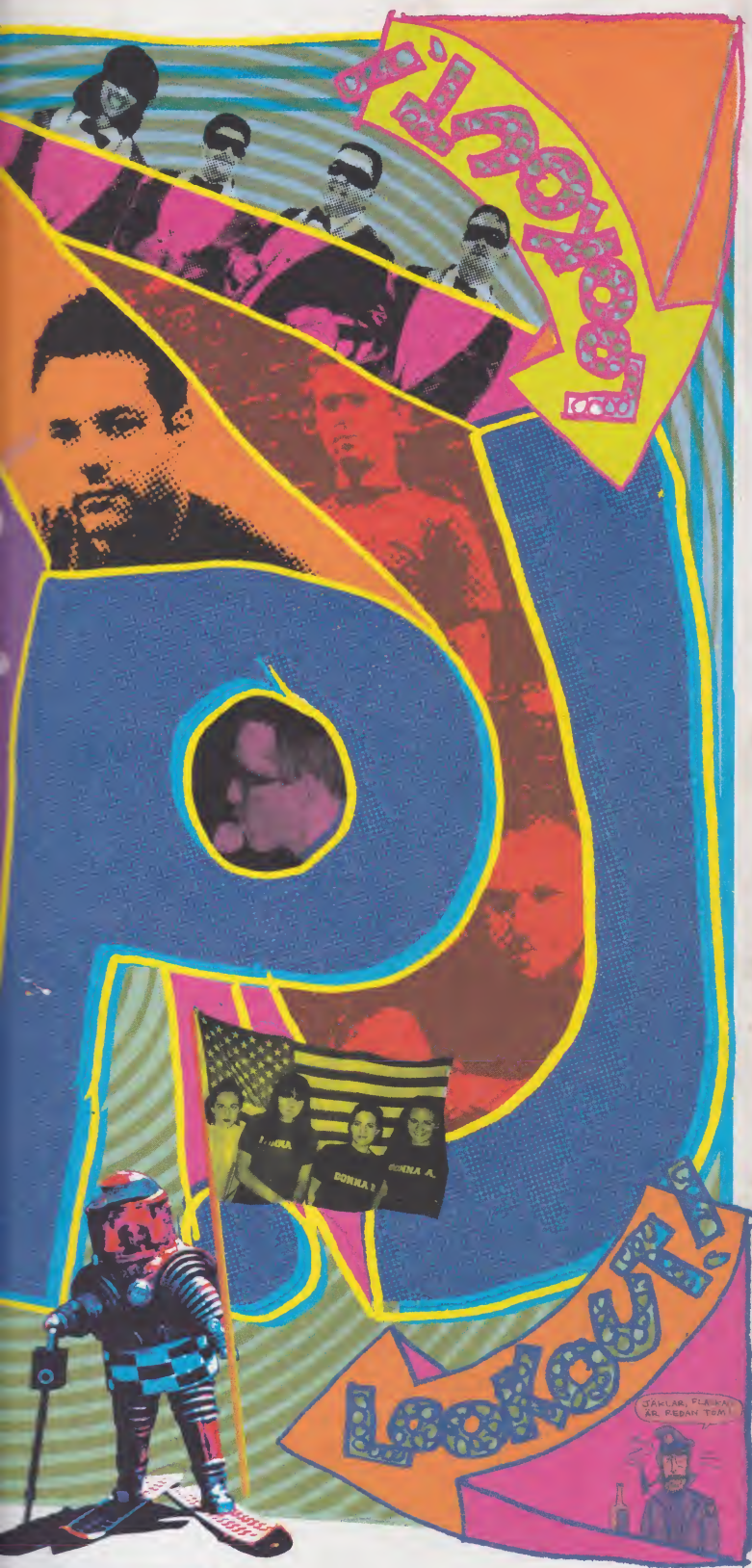
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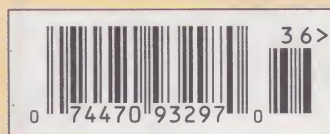
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"If you look different in this town, you don't hardly have to leave your house to get fucked with—it'll definitely come to you."

**Brian Deneke
was killed
because he
was a punk.**

**His killer
never spent a
night in jail.**

DEATH
IN



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INSIDE THE WTO